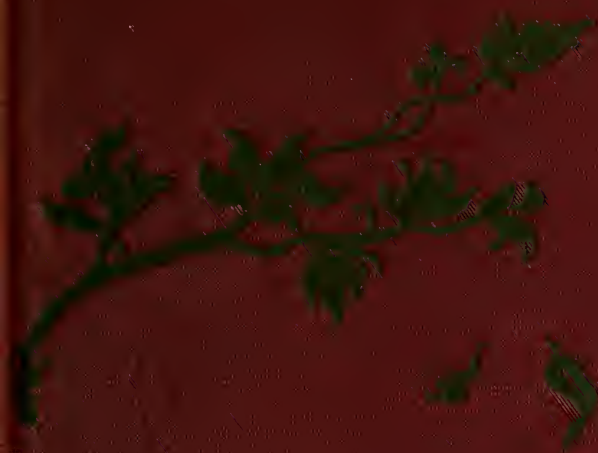




THE GREEN BAY TREE.



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THE GREEN BAY TREE

A TALE OF TO-DAY

BY

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P R E F A C E

“ I myself have seen the ungodly in great power : and flourishing like a green-bay tree.”

PSALM XXXVII. v. 36.

Prayer-book version.

“ They come in no misfortune like other folk : neither are they plagued like other men.”

“ Lo, these are the ungodly, these prosper in the world, and these have riches in possession.”

PSALM LXXIII. v. 5 & v. 12.

Prayer-book version.

PREFATORY NOTE.

Chapters I, V, X, XI, XII, XIII ; pars : 1—8 and 11—58 of Chapter IV ; pars : 1—36 and 45—50 of Chapter VIII, and pars : 1—11 and 21—30 of Chapter IX, and Chapters XV, XVI, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL, and L'ENVOI, are written by MR. W. H. WILKINS.

Chapters II, III, VI, VII, XIV ; pars : 9—10 and 59—126 of Chapter IV ; pars : 37—44 of Chapter VIII, and pars : 12—20 of Chapter IX, and Chapters XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII, are written by MR. HERBERT VIVIAN.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HIS BEST FRIEND.....	1
II. HARROW-ON-THE-HILL.....	9
III. THE SCAPEGOAT.....	20
IV. CAMBRIDGE.....	38
V. GWENDOLEN.....	52
VI. THE APOSTLES.....	65
VII. IN THE MAY WEEK.....	76
VIII. THE FIRST TRINITY BALL.....	86
IX. A UNION DEBATE ...	93
X. THE BOUNDER KING.....	98
XI. ELLE ET LUI.....	106
XII. COTTENHAM.....	112
XIII. AT HER FEET HE BOWED AND FELL.....	122
XIV. THE TRUMP CARD.....	127
XV. THE CITY OF LES DOULEURS.....	136
XVI. A CURE-HOUSE REVEL.....	149
XVII. A COUNTRY HOUSE UP-TO-DATE.....	163
XVIII. IN THE CONSERVATORY.....	171
XIX. THE MELTING OF THE ICE-MAIDEN.....	180
XX. A MINISTERIAL RECEPTION.....	189
XXI. AT THE LEVEE.....	201
XXII. MRS. MILES'S SEASON.....	206
XXIII. THE PLUCKING OF THE PROFESSOR.....	212
XXIV. HENLEY REGATTA.....	220
XXV. THE GRAFTING OF THE GREEN BAY TREE.....	232
XXVI. THE LORD WARDEN.....	244
XXVII. THE RIFT WITHIN THE LUTE.....	254
XXVIII. THE WANING HONEYMOON.....	262
XXIX. THE HOUSE OF RIMMON.....	269

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXX. THE PLUCKING OF THE PIGEON.....	278
XXXI. THE SERPENT IN THE EDEN.....	286
XXXII. FLIGHT.....	297
XXXIII. THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.....	307
XXXIV. THE SPROUTING OF THE BAY TREE.....	318
XXXV. THE WEST-SOUTHWARK ELECTION.....	324
XXXVI. GRUB-STREET, W.C.....	331
XXXVII. THE CROWN OF BAY-LEAVES.....	346
XXXVIII. THE SORROWS OF SANCTITY.....	359
XXXIX. THE WOOD OF ST. JOHN.....	368
XL. THE LAST STAGE.....	380
L'ENVOI.....	388

THE GREEN BAY TREE.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BEST FRIEND.

The two greatest stimulants in the world are youth and debt.
—B. DISRAELI: *Tancred*.

WHEN the Right Honorable Spencer Coryton lay a-dying, he beckoned his son to his bedside and whispered,

“Remember always that your best friend is yourself.”

The next morning the city of Bristol had lost its senior Parliamentary representative and the post of Judge-Advocate-General was vacant.

Walpole Coryton pondered much over his father's words, and the more he thought over them the more did they commend themselves to him. The late Judge-Advocate-General had certainly illustrated his theory by his example. Taken as a whole his had been a fortunate life, and he had himself to thank that it had been so. He was a self-made man, who owed most of the good things which had come in his way to his own cool head and his absolute indifference to the feelings of others. A scholarship had carried him from a Yorkshire grammar school to one of the smaller Oxford colleges and, when there, his wits had done the rest. He took his degree, was called to the Bar and, with a little money in hand, went on the Western Circuit. He picked up a brief or two, now and then a good one, did a little “devilling,” and bided his time.

He might have bided a very long time, had not great good fortune thrown him in the way of the worthy Miss Graves at a Clifton Subscription Ball. Miss Graves was the orphan daughter and heiress of a Bristol mustard-maker, who might have died a millionaire, the Bristol people said, if he had lived a little longer. But he did not, and so his daughter was left only comfortably off. Still, Miss Graves was rich enough to live in a commodious villa overlooking the breezy Clifton downs, to drive a gaudy yellow chariot known in the neighborhood as "the mustard pot," to subscribe liberally to the local charities, and to keep a "sheep-dog," as Becky Sharp would say, for propriety's sake—in this case an elderly spinster cousin.

Miss Graves was not without aspirations, if short of aspirates. She had a soul above mustard, and deliberately avoided the smelly old Redcliffe Street, where all her money had been made; she had a soul, too, above the gilded youth of Bristol and Clifton "society" who, it must be confessed, were for the most part decidedly provincial in their manners and their bearing. She was a woman of correct principles and correspondingly stupid. She occupied sittings—well to the front—at the Evangelical Church of St. Jude's, and was thought very highly of by the parochial clergy. Probably she would have ended by marrying one of them—fifty per cent. of the daughters of the well-to-do Bristol merchants marry clergymen, it is so "genteel"—had not fate thrown her across the path of that good-looking young barrister, Spencer Coryton.

Spencer Coryton saw his opportunity and made the most of it. Things were going rather hardly with him just then and time did not permit of a protracted wooing. The lover was arduous, the lady was not coy. He ascertained her nett market value. On the credit side, there was a little over two thousand a year; to her debit were the facts that she was plain and past her first bloom. She was, in short, like home-made bread, heavy but wholesome. But then he had nothing at all, except his good looks, his glib tongue, and his bright brains. Brains were not quite so much at a discount then as they are now.

The market was not so overstocked. Now all the young men are so very clever that a stupid one is quite at a premium. But this in parenthesis.

Spencer Coryton thought it over and the lady thought it over; that is to say he thought it over for her, for her mind was receptive and not readily given to new ideas. So Miss Graves very decorously "fell in love." She was dazzled by the brilliancy of this young barrister, his conversation opened a new vista upon her limited horizon. She began to think that to be a barrister's wife would be quite as "genteel" as to be the wife of a clergyman, and to be the wife of a Member of Parliament—for he had confided to her his ambitious dreams—almost aristocratic. Within a few months of their first meeting at the Clifton Ball these two were wed.

Two thousand a year is only two thousand a year after all, though it assumes different aspects from the point of view one looks at it. It does not go far, if one has large ideas. Spencer Coryton had large ideas, though he had been taught by experience how to make one sovereign do the work of two better than most men, and his wife, with her inherited commercial instinct, could almost make one do the work of three. Her stupidity was only with regard to abstract ideas; such concrete matters as butchers' and bakers' bills she grasped with remarkable quickness.

Within a year or two of his marriage, through his wife's local connection and influence—her father had been an Alderman and Mayor of his native city—Spencer Coryton entered Parliament as one of the Conservative Members for Bristol and, when once he was in, he was not turned out again. With the magic letters M. P. added to his name, the Member for Bristol contrived, by "guinea-pigging," floating Companies and other means known to impecunious Members of Parliament, to add materially to his income. Still, appearances had to be kept up—more was required of public men in those days than now—and it required very careful management to make both ends meet.

So long as Mrs. Coryton lived, they did meet

somehow, but when she died, some ten years after their marriage, leaving her husband with an only son, he gave himself wider scope and, on the principle that, as one can only live once, one may as well enjoy oneself, he began to dip into his capital.

It was not all enjoyment, though, for, like many other astute men, he speculated and, despite astuteness, lost. He was far too much mixed up with bubble companies not to be bitten with the gambling mania. Still, taking his life as a whole and looking at it from a purely selfish point of view, it cannot be denied that he got a good deal of enjoyment out of it.

He rented a well-appointed little house in St. James's Place—which in those days was not so much given over to the lodging-house fiend as it is now—one of the little houses which cast a backward glance over the Green Park; he belonged to all the best clubs, he stayed at many of the best country houses, he did a little racing in a gentlemanly way, and he flattered and dined all the wealthy and leading men of his party.

In the party he was known as a useful man, and a "useful man" in politics is generally the one who does the dirty work. He was great in the party Caucus and well known as a popular platform speaker, an astute wire-puller, and one who could trim his sails to the passing wind. His was not the highest form of statesmanship perhaps, but it was very useful to those who worship at the shrine of the Jumping Cat. The conservative leaders were well disposed towards him, and the Dukes and the moneyed men regarded him with patronizing friendship. When his party at last emerged from the cold shades of Opposition to the sunshine of Office, he was rewarded with the minor post of Judge-Advocate-General—so called, say some, because the man who holds it is neither a Judge nor an Advocate nor a General—and there was a Privy Councillorship along with it.

Spencer Coryton swore not loud but deep, for, like all men of his type, he thought himself worthy of Cabinet-office at least. But half a loaf is better than

no bread, and he took what was offered in the spirit with which it was given and comforted himself with the thought that this added dignity would stave off his creditors for a while. "To him that hath shall be given" is the rule in political life—and in everything else as well, for the matter of that. The new Judge-Advocate-General knew this—no one better—and he was far too shrewd a man to flaunt his poverty.

"To be poor is a misfortune, to look poor is a crime," he would say to himself, as he sat down to breakfast in the dining-room of his cosy little house in St. James's Place, after throwing a heap of unopened bills upon the fire. Half an hour later he would whirl away in his spick-and-span brougham to attend to his official duties or a board-meeting of some Company of which he was Chairman or a Committee-Meeting at the House, faultlessly dressed, alert, smiling, as though there were no such things as bills or creditors in the world.

Acting consistently on these lines, he managed to live in luxury and comfort, honored and envied among men, until the day of his death. What the future might bring, what would happen if any of his many wires became tangled, what might become, after his death, of his only son, then a boy at Harrow, he neither knew nor cared.

"He has his wits as I have mine. Why should I trouble about him, he has never troubled about me," he would probably have said, if any one had ventured to remonstrate with him about his son.

But no one remonstrated, for none troubled and none cared.

A chill contracted at a political meeting carried off Spencer Coryton rather suddenly and, when the morning papers announced his death and the *Times* dismissed the late Judge-Advocate-General with a brief obituary notice, his friends and acquaintances, who read it at their breakfast-tables, said, "Poor fellow, I wonder who will get his place," and went on with their breakfasts.

That was his requiem—the tribute of his friends. He had not many of them, for a man who goes on the principle that he is himself his best friend, is not likely

to be over-blessed with others. And when, a few days later, it ran round the Clubs that he had left his affairs in an embarrassed state, the men who had eaten his dinners shook their heads and remarked sententiously that it was very wrong for a man to live beyond his means and that they for their part always feared there was something not quite straight about him: he was far too much mixed up with doubtful Companies, etc., etc., and so on through all the other variations of that "I told you so," with which wise men of the world are so prone to be wise after the event.

"There is a son, isn't there?" said one or two, "I wonder what will become of him?"

But very few gave more than a passing thought to the youth, who, in the darkened house in St. James's Place, was making personal acquaintance with the world's hardness and meanness.

The "friends" who had known the dead man best shunned the house, as though it had been plague-stricken, and most of them now forgot all about him and his son too. But Walpole Coryton and the lawyers unravelled everything between them, and when that was done, the son found that the father had left him nothing but his debts.

It was not exactly a promising state of affairs, but the younger Coryton was not one to indulge in useless lamentations and vain regrets. An instinct of self-preservation taught him to put a bold face on it and to try to hide as much as possible of the true state of affairs from the world. Things might have been worse, for he discovered that he had £4,000, a legacy left him by a cousin of his mother's, the principal of which his father had been unable to touch.

The ideal son would, of course, have sacrificed this to pay his father's debts and gone forth penniless into the world. But Walpole was not an ideal son, he was simply the son of his father and, mindful of his dying advice, he kept the £4,000 in his own pocket. He had, in fact, some little debts of his own, but he didn't mean to settle them either, at least if he could help it. The events of the past few weeks had taught him more than ever the value of that touchstone of modern life—ready money.

So the late Judge-Advocate-General's affairs settled themselves, and both they and he were soon forgotten.

When all was over, Walpole Coryton sat down to survey the situation and to sketch out his plan of campaign.

Matters stood thus : He was to all intents and purposes his own master. The fifteen months or so, which had elapsed since he left Harrow, had been spent abroad. His father had sent him to Heidelberg, ostensibly to learn languages, in reality to get him out of the way. He made an excuse for not sending him to Cambridge or Oxford, the true reason being that he did not feel inclined to give him the money to go.

Walpole Coryton knew this and, when his father's death left him free to choose what to do with his £4,000, he resolved to spend part of it on a University education. He would carry out his original intention and go up to Cambridge. He chose Cambridge, like everything else, for a reason. Upon calculation he found that most of his Harrow friends—certainly those who were most likely to be useful—were there now. Arguing to himself that it is no use having friends unless one can make use of them, he resolved to go up to Cambridge and do so.

Walpole Coryton smelt his destiny, as dogs smell a wolf, and that destiny was political life. He knew all about it—or thought he did—its difficulties, its discouragements, its meanness, its ingratitude, but with him politics were a passion, and he resolved to brave all. His father's career, so far from discouraging him, was to be to him as a beacon light, warning him of the pit-falls to avoid—an experience by which he might benefit and in the light of which he meant to succeed where the other had failed. That which had not been possible in the one generation should be accomplished in the next. He had his father's name—not much it was true—but still it would serve as an introduction to public life. He could not afford to waste any of his little advantages.

His father's last words still rang in his ears : his best friend must be himself. With the son as with the sire self came first, self second and, if there was

anything left, self again. He was in fact all self: the God he worshipped was Self. "Nothing," said Mira-beau, "is impossible to the man who believes in himself." If that were true, then young Coryton had already won half his battle, for himself was about all that he did believe in.

Walpole Coryton was just what his inherited instincts and the circumstances of his life had made him, nothing more and nothing less. There is an amiable idea prevalent among some people that we come into the world like a sheet of white paper and that all the ugly blots and smudges and smears which appear upon the surface thereafter are of our own making. But is it so? Is not the paper often so smeared and warped in the making that it takes a life's work to clean and smooth it—if indeed the marks be not rather accentuated and deepened? We partake of the texture of the clay in which we are moulded, and we have to fight—if we fight at all—not only against ourselves, but against the inherited vices and predilections of those who gave us life. Just as the cripple, the consumptive, the idiot, the diseased of all kinds are handicapped in body from their birth by circumstances over which they have no control, so are many weighed down in mind and hampered in soul by hereditary tendencies, against which they often struggle in vain.

Walpole Coryton was his father's son, with his father's clear head and long sight and with all his father's selfishness and unscrupulousness intensified by the training he had received. "As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined" and in this case it had been bent—and bent designedly—into crooked and tortuous lines. The child was the father of the boy, the boy of the man. The childhood need not be described. Childhood at best is always tedious. What the boyhood was, we must look back a little to see.

CHAPTER II.

HARROW-ON-THE-HILL.

Au commencement de la vie toutes les coupes sont pleines : buvez lentement, si vous voulez qu'il vous reste quelquechose sur le tard. Ne buvez pas trop tôt les vins capiteux, car alors vous ne sauriez plus sentir les saveurs douces et saines.—PIERRE LOTI.

"SELL for you, Shepheard, you clown. Can't come in. Saw you coming."

"What, at it already! Look sharp and open. I'll take a hand till lock-up."

Three youths were playing Nap in a room of Mr. Wellesley's house at Harrow on the first day of term. The air was thick with smoke. Each boy had a cigarette in his mouth and a tumbler of claret and soda by his side. The door had been secured by the simple expedient of thrusting a poker into a hole in the floor just inside the room. The hole had been there beyond the memory of boy and had done duty for many generations of rule-breakers.

"That game of pretending to bar out Shepheard is getting played out," remarked Harold Gaverigan, the new-comer, as he shook hands all round, "we really must think of something just a little less chest-nutty. Last term old Weller came in at least half a dozen times, when the door was barred, and each time we sang out, 'Go away, Shepheard,' in a way that wasn't even plausible, and each time he found us four sitting in the most unnatural attitudes on hard chairs round a table with absolutely nothing on it but a titty-bowl. We're sure to be clobbered at this rate. And just now I heard Coryton's voice screaming, 'Propose,' before I was half-way upstairs."

"That was before Pim came in," remarked the boy named suavely, "the Pigeon and I were just having a gentle flutter at *écarté*."

"In which you began with king and *vol* each game, I wager," Gaverigan replied with a smile. "You should play with me, Pigeon, you know I never do such things. Come on, I'll take a hand."

The poker was replaced, Gaverigan poured himself a glass of cherry-brandy on the sideboard, and the four were soon immersed in their game.

Meanwhile let us take the opportunity of casting a look around the room and its inmates. A single row of pictures ran all round the walls, in weird frames like those at the *Chat Noir*. Some fencing-foils and boxing-gloves suggested active tastes different from those in fashion at Harrow, and an array of hunting-trophies served to suggest—on the principle that "he may safely lie who comes from far"—a possible *cultus* of the country gentleman's fetish in place of the cricket-and-footballolatry, which are exacted at public schools. The only solid emblem of physical prowess was an absurd pewter pot, with the words "House Sack-race" writ large upon it and a collection of quill pens stuck contemptuously inside.

The books were unusually numerous for a boy's room and were arranged with an evident eye to effect. The battered school-books, with the regulation stamp on the edges of the leaves, were in a curtained shelf behind a screen; in a prominent case, opposite the windows, where the light showed up their gilded calf, was a set of school prize-books,—the Bouchier History prize, the Ebrington French prize, and a prize won for an English essay on Cardinal Richelieu; underneath them were scattered, in studied confusion, the books meant to be paraded: Montaigne's Essays, Mill on Liberty, Shelley's works, Disraeli's novels and Chesterfield's letters; underneath again, in a locked cupboard, was a naughty collection of yellow-covered novels in two languages.

There was a long box of flowers in the window, chiefly geraniums and heliotrope and some sweet peas, that had been trained to climb the thick wire netting, which cages in Harrow boys as securely as if they were lunatics or linnets. In the panels of what looked like a wardrobe-door were pasted cartoons of political

celebrities from *Britain*, a paper which describes itself as the organ of Conservative working-men and apparently attributes to those rare birds vulgar and rudimentary ideas both of art and wit.

Inside this door was the famous Harrow fold-up bed, which is let down on to the floor when required for use and put back in its musty cupboard during the day. These are the beds in which new boys are popularly supposed to be shut up, head-downwards, every Guy Fawkes' day and perhaps were before this desperately mollycoddle age, when bullying has gone out of fashion and boys are allowed to grow up into flabby editions of Mr. Oscar Wilde. The object of this kind of bed is to keep up appearances and conceal the fact that the costly privilege of education at a crack public school does not exempt boys from the poor man's hardship of having to use his bedroom not only to sleep in, but to live in, work in, play in, even take his meals in.

The latter is pressed upon the boys as a privilege, only those in the sixth-form being allowed to have breakfast and tea in their bedrooms, and three or four clubbing together in what is called a "find," for the organization of those indigestible feasts. The lower boys take all their food downstairs, but, in revenge, they are packed away two, three, and even four together, in little dens scarcely bigger than a saddle-room.

Another rough device served to conceal the washing arrangements in a similar spirit of pretence and prudery. It was now made to do duty as a sideboard and supported a heavy home-made cake, a syphon, a bottle of claret and a smaller one of cherry-brandy.

On each side of the fireplace was a long, deep wicker chair with soft chintz cushions, which combined great cheapness and undoubted comfort. One was the property of the master of the room, Walpole Coryton, the other that of his bosom friend, Lord Pimlico, who, being only in the upper-fifth, had not a room to himself and, while nominally sharing one on the same landing with Shephard, had taken to making Coryton's room for all practical purposes his headquarters.

Walpole Coryton, who was now dealing, had never

been known to put himself out one hair's-breadth for anybody and yet somehow every one was devoted to him. He hadn't such a thing as a scruple about him, but he possessed the cardinal knack or virtue of never being found out. There were few more popular fellows in the school, and this though he habitually offended all the most deeply rooted prejudices of the place, from shirking football to taking an interest in his work.

The charm about him was that he never resented anything. That was his philosophy. He might have been bullied and tricked and disappointed and he would have turned a smiling face to the smiter, even though he bore malice. But he never was bullied or tricked or disappointed; everything always turned out to him for the best in this best of possible worlds.

There was an element of mischief in his character. He was not precisely cruel, but he would announce, with cynical half-truth, that to see other people suffer added a zest to any enjoyment of his own at the time. He said he never enjoyed a blow-out at Paul's or Hance's so much as on a very cold day, with a crowd of very ragged street-boys flattening their noses enviously at the window. But then again he would find a pleasure in making those same ragamuffins scramble for pennies as soon as his feast was done.

If he had any antipathy at all, it was for violent exercise. He was a sportsman in a sort of negative way. He liked going to a meet, but would never join in a run; he would get boys to bowl to him on a summer afternoon, but would never join in a game where he might have to field out; he took a somewhat platonic interest in racing and had the reputation of being a gambler, but he only betted or played to win, and was never known to lose his head at cards.

The marvel about him was that he would do the rashest things imaginable and never seem to run the faintest risk. For instance, he would smoke a cigarette openly in his room after the midday dinner, play cards there in the afternoon and dispense cherry-brandy to all his friends at tea-time, though the discovery of any one of those habits would have entailed

a flogging and perhaps degradation from the sixth form; he prepared all his construes with a crib, he got all his mathematics and tedious exercises done for him by other boys, shirked impositions and had even been known to shirk a school or chapel, and yet remained as far above suspicion as a new-laid egg.

He possessed considerable physical beauty with a dash of devilry in it, an arched nose terminating in a point, large dark liquid eyes, a short upper lip, tiny fawn's ears and black wavy hair. He was nearly eighteen, and already slight traces of dissipation had formed themselves upon his face,—blue-black pencil-lings under the eyes and a faint line at the corner of the mouth. It was a face which physiognomists would fancy they could read offhand, but which really served to cloak many unexpected touches of character.

Playing nap there that evening, he looked quite in his element and might have stepped straight out of one of Caravaggio's pictures.

On the right was Lord Pimlico; beyond him was the Honorable Wilfrid Tyrconnel, commonly called "the Pigeon" and on the left was Harold Gaverigan. The first two and Coryton were somewhat profanely known to the House as "the Trinity" from their inseparable intinacy. Coryton had struck up a friendship with Pimlico, partly because he might be useful and partly because he was amusing, and the two had adopted Tyrconnel simply and solely in order to make him useful. Pimlico was only in the upper-fifth and nominally had breakfast and tea in hall, though practically he made one of the "find," or mess, in Coryton's room, which comprised Coryton, Tyrconnel, and Gaverigan.

Lord Pimlico was the son and heir of the Marquis of Southwark—a Cabinet Minister who owned race-horses—and he would some day be a magnate in his county, if not in the kingdom. He was a wild, dare-devil sort of youth and a great contrast to Coryton, not only from the unlicked, semi-barbarity of his manners, but from the animalism of his emotions. He was muscular and erect, with a bull-dog neck, wolfish teeth that showed when he laughed, projecting

eyeballs, short hair, and a pimply face. His voice was harsh, even when he sought to be agreeable, and he had an unpleasant habit of panting in people's faces when he spoke to them.

The Pigeon was also an only son. His father was a *richissime* soap-boiler, who had married the only daughter of the House of Tyrconnel, adopted her name in addition to his own of Simpson, then dropped the Simpson altogether, and finally blossomed out, a year before the events of this chapter, as the brand-new Baron Baltinglass of Blarney. The Pigeon was not altogether a fool—the soap-boiler's blood in his veins took care of that;—it was his singular gentleness of manner and his exaggerated conscientiousness which had earned him his nickname. He had an unusual regard for truth and had surprised masters by refusing to accept the credit of successes, to which he was not strictly entitled, and boys by the perversity with which he offered himself up as a sacrifice to accept blame and punishment, which a discreet silence would have staved off.

There was one strange vein of character in his composition, probably a stray touch of atavism from the gay roysterers among his mother's Cavalier ancestors, from whom came also the heroism and chivalry of his disposition. Even in his most conscientious moments he had an irresistible craving for excitement. If it led him to break rules, he made no mystery about it and was ready to take the consequences, but excitement he must have at all costs. Coryton and Pimlico provided him with a certain measure of it with cards, and at the same time provided themselves with a welcome addition to their stores of pocket-money. In any exciting piece of mischief that was on foot he was sure to have a hand.

He was often at issue with authority and that without the scapegrace's best defence—a diplomatic dissimulation. His honesty was in such cases the worst policy and availed nothing to protect him. He was not long in making the discovery that the ecclesiastical theories about virtue and happiness going ever hand in hand are a delusion and a snare. In-

deed the wise men of old were the first to admit it. Throughout the Old Testament there runs a chronic and morose resentment at the very good time indeed enjoyed in this world by the wicked. "They flourish like a green bay-tree," "their eyes swell with fatness, they do even as they list," it is petulantly exclaimed; and much hot breath is expended in foretelling calamity concerning them. But somehow or other the day of retribution seems strangely slow to dawn and, while the saints are fasting, giving tithes of all they possess, and generally making themselves miserable, the sinners go on getting all the cakes and ale, waxing fat and kicking, and gobbling up the fatted calves. Hil-debrand summed up the situation, when he exclaimed cynically upon his death-bed, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore I die in exile."

The remaining player was Harold Gaverigan—a youth by no means accustomed to be kept waiting. He was the only son of a Cornish country gentleman of ancient lineage, a tall fair boy with childish face and twinkling eyes, but a certain determination of manner that generally got him his own way.

After the game had proceeded for about an hour, the lock-up bell rang. The boys hastily put away their contraband goods, rinsed their mouths with eau-de-cologne and water to remove the tell-tale smell of smoke, and exchanged their tweed coats for the regulation swallow-tails, before going down to answer their names in hall.

Mr. Wellesley went the round, shaking hands with every one according to the custom of first day of term; the head of the house read through the roll-call; and Mr. Wellesley retired to his study. Before doing so he said in bell-like tones:

"Coryton, Mr. Tyrconnel,* and Gaverigan, I want to speak to you after supper."

The usual supper, consisting of cold meat, cheese and swipes, was laid out on the hall-table, but the

* It is scarcely necessary to explain, for the benefit of the ignorant, that boys with the title of "Honorable" are called "Mr." officially at Harrow.

boys, fresh from better fare at home, showed little inclination to sit down to school-food so soon.

Shepherd and two others alone did so. Shepherd was a heavy good-natured fellow, accustomed to be laughed at all round. Coryton slapped him on the back, as he passed through the hall with his two friends on the way to the house-master's study.

"It was a sell for you, old boy, to-day, wasn't it?" he said playfully.

"What was?" retorted Shepherd, with his mouth full of bread and cheese.

"Why, not being able to get into my room this evening, when we barred you out."

Shepherd gave a grunt of disgust and was about to expostulate, but the three had passed on laughing.

Mr. Wellesley received them with an unusually grave face. It was a face not unlike that of the Duke of Wellington and he was inordinately vain of the resemblance. When he liked, he could look alarmingly severe, but those who knew him well were never afraid of him, for he had the kindest of hearts and rarely punished if he could avoid it.

"Sit down," he said austere, scarcely looking up from the *Quarterly Review* he was reading.

Coryton with easy indifference ensconced himself at once in a big leather arm-chair near the window and sat dangling his legs. Tyrconnel, in a rather constrained manner, took a hard chair, folded his arms and wondered anxiously what was coming. Gaverigan leaned carelessly against a revolving bookcase, resting his forehead on his forefinger and trying to look unconcerned. He always studied his attitudes, and he had seen one something like this in an engraving of Disraeli the younger.

Mr. Wellesley went on reading for nearly five minutes, as if no one were in the room. Presently Gaverigan gave a long cough, obviously intended to express the fact that he was waiting. Mr. Wellesley's eyes lighted up with a grim smile, but otherwise he made not the faintest sign of having heard. Then Coryton, in the most natural voice in the world, asked Tyrconnel from the other side of the room at what

time speechroom was next morning. Mr. Wellesley said "Hush," but still did not look up from his book. The boys gave a suppressed titter and relapsed into silence.

At last Mr. Wellesley looked up.

"I am going to speak to you, boys, on a serious matter," he said, in clear deliberate tones, "you must look on what I have to say in the light of a warning. It has come to my knowledge during the holidays—no matter how—that card-playing has been going on in the house. I ask no questions. I do not wish to be told anything"—he added, as Tyrconnel impulsively tried to say something; "do not interrupt me, Mr. Tyrconnel. It is possible that some of you may know who the culprits are. If so, you will be doing them and me a service by informing them that it must be stopped at once—at once, do you hear? I shall be on the look-out and, if I catch any one, I shall not have the least hesitation about sending him up to the head-master. I appeal to you, boys, for the good name of the House,—I mean, you can remind your friends that a scandal of this sort would be very unpleasant for us all. Other things have been mentioned to me also. A number of wine-bottles were found in the orchard. But one warning must cover all delinquencies. If any one's conscience prick him, let it be a lesson to him for the future. Now you may go."

"I would like to say first, sir," said Coryton in his usual cheerful tones, "that I am quite innocent both of cards and bottles. I suppose you sent for us because you thought we had something to do with it, but I assure you that you are mistaken—at least so far as I am concerned," he added hastily, perceiving that Tyrconnel was about to correct him.

"I believe you, my boy," the master replied, looking into Coryton's frank eyes, which always stood him in good stead even in the worst predicaments; "I am sorry if my suspicions fell on the wrong heads. Too bad, is it not?" he added with a twinkle, "*dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas.*"

"That's one for you, Pigeon," said Gaverigan in a stage whisper, nudging his friend.

"Now run along," said Mr. Wellesley, "and, Gaverigan," he added with emphasis, "I advise you to give up those incessant romps and barrings-out with Shepheard. Now you are in the sixth, you must put away childish things. Good-night. Do not forget what I have said to you."

"You are an amazing chap, Pigeon," said Coryton at breakfast next morning, recurring to this interview for about the twentieth time, "I really thought at one time you were going to say to old Weller, 'Yes, sir, it's quite true, I have a card-party every afternoon between fourth school and lock-up, and those were all my bottles in the orchard'!"

"Of course I was going to tell him. You said we none of us had anything to do with it. I can't help your lying to save your own skin, but I am not going to give a tacit assent to any lies you may tell about me in my presence."

"Good old Pigeon!" they all laughed.

"But what were the bottles?" asked Gaverigan, "you surely hadn't drunk all that brandy, Pigeon?"

"It wasn't brandy," he replied, "it was that wretched Coryton's claret-bottles. Before starting for his *exeat*, he came to me with a travelling-bag full of bottles and asked me to keep them in my bag till he came back, as I wasn't going for an *exeat*."

"Poor Pigeon! Did you ever escape having your 'ex' stopped, I wonder?"

"So I kept them in my bag till he came back, and then he pretended he knew nothing about them, and I was saddled with the beastly things."

A roar of laughter greeted this admission.

"Well, I had to throw them out over the orchard-wall from my window at dead of night and there was a light in Weller's study at the time and I heard him open his window to see what was up. So perhaps he had his suspicions about me."

"Not improbable, I should say," put in Coryton judicially. "What puzzles me is how he heard about the cards. I wonder whether William can have told his father."

"No, William Wellesley isn't a sneak, and, besides, he doesn't know."

"I should smile! They all know. And the old man knows more than you imagine," said Gaverigan, "didn't you hear what he said about barring out Shepheard? But he seemed to believe you, Coryton, when you said you had nothing to do with it."

"Of course. I am accustomed to be believed," said Coryton proudly.

"I suppose we shall all have to turn saints now," put in Tyrconnel tentatively.

"On the contrary," replied Coryton, "we're going to have a big card-party to-morrow afternoon. After giving us that warning he won't dream of suspecting that we aren't going to take it. I'm glad it's happened. Now we shall be as safe as houses. The beginning of the term mustn't be neglected. It's the best time, because everybody has got plenty of cash. I've asked Williams and Wilmot from Skipper's house, and we can have in Shepheard, if you like."

"But you've no right to bring in boys from other houses. You haven't been five years in the House yet."

"My good Pigeon, rights are made for slaves. You know I always do just what pleases me."

"Did you get any cards in the holidays, Coryton?" asked Gaverigan, helping himself to jam and Cornish cream.

"Rather! didn't we, Pigeon? By Jove! I wish we could get Vixie down one afternoon. She plays Nap better than any of you. Stunning girl, isn't she, Pigeon?"

"Who is she?" inquired Gaverigan.

"A girl who was staying at Blarney. Miss Violet Tresillian, commonly called the Vixen. No end of a sport. Keen as mustard. Brave as a lioness."

"'Innocent as a lord,' to quote some poor devil who was accused of sheep-stealing the other day."

"Yes, just about. She promised to make Sir Edward bring her down for a cricket-match one day this term. I'll get 'em to come on a whole holiday and then we can all lunch together at the King's Head. You must write and remind them, Pigeon."

"What, already?"

"Don't be a fool, Pigeon. You know you're just as devoted to her as the rest of us. As for Pim, he was ready to lick her boots."

"Surprising I didn't get my remove this term," growled Pimlico, to change the subject.

"Much more surprising their making you a monitor, Coryton," said Gaverigan, "I never was more astonished than when Butler called you up to give you the key in Speecher this morning."

"It's only the natural reward of wisdom and piety, my dear chap," he replied gaily.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCAPEGOAT.

Rien n'est bête de ce qui réussit, Papa.—GUY DE MAUPAS-SANT, *Notre Cœur*.

THE first few weeks of the term passed off uneventfully. The card-party was a great success and was followed by several others without arousing the least suspicion. Tyrcomel got sent to extra-school for failure in his holiday-task. It was very hard lines, for he had known it perfectly, but Shepherd had spoken to him during the examination and the master in charge had torn up their papers as a punishment. Shepherd growled about it for days, but the Pigeon took it more philosophically. Poor fellow, he was getting pretty well accustomed to hard lines by this time.

To crown his disappointment, the extra-school was fixed for the afternoon of the whole holiday, on which Sir Edward Tresillian and his niece were to visit Harrow. At first the Pigeon was for asking them to put off coming, but it seemed more than doubtful whether their engagements would permit another visit, so the Pigeon consoled himself with the prospect of seeing them in the morning and at luncheon.

The day dawned bright and clear, and the boys were in the highest spirits, as they dallied over their breakfast till long past ten. Pimlico was going to spend the morning at a wicket; Gaverigan had arranged to go down to "Ducker," for a bathe after the eleven o'clock "bill;"—Tyrconnel and Coryton hurried down to meet the 10.30 train by the Metropolitan Railway.

"Poor old Pigeon," said Coryton, as they ran down the hill, "having to go to 'extra' this fine day. Vixie will be disappointed, when she hears. Never mind, I'll wait outside for you afterwards, with a bag of buns, if you're a good boy, and you shall be taken down to Ducker straight away."

On their way down, they passed a number of people also on their way to the station, including several masters, who proposed to take advantage of the holiday for a run up to town.

"I only hope none of those beaks will take it into their heads to ask me if I had leave to come to the station," said Tyrconnel plaintively, as they entered the gravel-walk leading up to it, "'twould be just my luck if they did. But they'd hardly be so mean just as they're going to enjoy themselves."

"Oh! you don't know the beasts. That's the very moment when they're often most vicious. I luckily thought of asking Weller last night, when he was correcting my prose. I'd wait outside if I were you. It's no use running useless risks."

"No, here we are. The train's just coming in. They wouldn't have the cheek to stop me when I was with people."

The train steamed in and the boys were soon shaking hands with Sir Edward and Violet, who were accompanied by a tall lady and a stout military-looking gentleman.

"How are you, boys?" exclaimed Sir Edward heartily. "Let me introduce you to my cousin, Lady Giddy. You know Colonel Lockhart already, I think. Shall we walk or drive up? What is your programme for us?"

"We must go up to eleven-bill first," replied Tyr-

connel, "then we can order lunch and go and pretend to look at the cricket, if you like."

He had hardly done speaking when one of the masters, Mr. Brooks, an ill-favored old clergyman with shabby clothes and round shoulders, came up to him and said, "One moment, Mr. Tyrconnel, please; I want to speak to you."

"Poor Pigeon!" said Coryton regreffully, as he watched the incident, "he's the most unlucky beggar alive. Brooker has a special spite against him and would send him up as soon as look at him."

"Why, what's he done?" asked Sir Edward, in astonishment.

"The station's out of bounds, and, if we're caught there without leave, there's no end of a fuss. I happened to get leave from Wellesley last night, so I'm all right. But the poor Pigeon will get dropped on."

"Surely it isn't such a dreadful crime to come and meet your friends at the station."

"One of the seven deadily sins, I assure you, Sir Edward. Well, Pigeon, what's the verdict?"

"Five hundred lines by lock-up to-morrow. And he wants to speak to you, old chap."

"This is too bad!" exclaimed Sir Edward hotly, "I'll go and speak to the man myself. He was at Harrow with me and, if I take all the blame on myself, he may listen to reason. It's a shame, pouncing on boys when they're with ladies, in this way."

The others made their way slowly up the hill, Tyrconnel and Violet leading the way.

"You see what we have to put up with, Vixie," said the former, "it's worse than Poland under the Russians."

"Very provoking," said the girl with a soft light in her eyes. "I shall never forgive myself for being the innocent cause of it all, for I feel that you ran this risk solely on my account."

"Nonsense, Vixie, you know I would submit to any punishment for you sake."

Violet Tresillian was a universal favorite, and yet no one knew exactly why they liked her. She was one of those girls who really haven't a feature, if you

try to dissect their appearance, but, taken as a whole, she was decidedly attractive and even pretty. Her face was round and smooth and childlike, her slightly turned-up nose and mischievous eyes gave a suggestion of devilry, and when her cherry-red lips parted, as they constantly did in sunny smiles, they revealed a dazzling set of pearly teeth. Great waves of golden hair were hemmed in under a sailor-hat, trimmed with dark-blue ribbon, chosen out of compliment to Harrow. She wore a well-fitting tailor-made dress of thin blue cloth, which gave a hint of horsiness and served to show off her compact figure, which was already well developed, though she was now only just sixteen.

The great charm about her was the fresh, innocent way in which she said the most startling things imaginable. Everybody treated her as an utter child, but in reality she had a much longer head than any one gave her credit for, and had already a scheme of life well thought out, as well as a reason for nearly everything she said or did. It was commonly supposed that her uncle would leave most of his money to her, but she felt by no means sure on the point and was determined to secure the kind of husband she had in her mind as soon as possible. He was to be agreeable and ready to let her have her own way, that went without saying, but the chief requisites, to her mind, were money and ambition,—especially ambition.

She had thought of the Pigeon—whenever any one thought of the Pigeon it was always to see what could be got out of him—but, though the Pigeon was a nice boy and had any amount of money, she was not sure about him on the question of ambition. Now Coryton had ambition; he did not tell everybody so, but she had ascertained the fact for herself; he was also a nice boy, and of course the only son of so successful a personage as Her Majesty's Judge-Advocate-General would be well off.

But it was too soon to do more than lay the foundations of a flirtation with either of them, she reflected as she walked up the hill, making pretty speeches to

Wilfrid Tyreonnell. Boys' characters were hopelessly unformed before five-and-twenty and even after, for the matter of that. A girl of sixteen knew infinitely more of the world than any of them. However, boys were always fun to play with.

Coryton was pointing out the various school-buildings to Lady Giddy, as boys seem to think visitors expect them to do. That pretentious erection of startling red brick and hideous design was the "new schools," chiefly devoted to the futile study of Natural Science, known in schoolboy parlance as "Stinks;" the little house over the way, from which proceeded hideous discords, was devoted to instruction in the "sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music," chiefly for the benefit of the School Volunteers' Band; the precipitous road between this and the new Schools led to the ill-drained football-field, where, after the autumnal rains, the athletes of compulsion wallowed almost up to their necks in foetid mud; beyond the "footer-field" was the school bathing-place "Ducker" (originally called "Duck-puddle," but the Harrow dialect gives the *er* termination to every possible word), and "Dueker" was really the least unpleasant institution in the school; here was the school chapel, disagreeably modern for a school that prided itself on age, but it might not look bad in a hundred years or so; the building in the enclosure beyond it was the Vaughan Library, built in honor of the late Head Master, for the benefit of the boys, but as a matter of fact almost exclusively used by the masters; the big house beyond it was the Head Master's—the largest in the School, with accommodation for sixty boys; the Head Master must make a prodigious income out of them all; here they must turn up a small flight of steps, past the French Master's house, and join the stream of boys, all hurrying in the same direction.

By this time Sir Edward and Coryton had caught up the others and they all went on towards the school-yard, to witness the ceremony of "bill."

"Cross-grained chap, Brooks," said Sir Edward, "I had quite a hard job with him, though I laid it on

very thick about the memory of old times and all that. But I think I've got you off, Wilfrid, old man. He says he's bound to mention it to Wellesley, but that he won't be harder on you than he can help."

"That's awfully good of you, Sir Edward. I am only sorry you've had so much trouble on my account."

When they reached the iron gates of the school-yard, the boys parted company from their friends to take their places in the procession and answer their names. On the lowest step of the flight, leading up to the old schools, stood a master in cap and gown with the "bill-book," or roll-call, in his hand. Sir Edward led his party up a few steps above him, where a few friends of other boys were already congregated.

Violet was struck by the freshness and picturesqueness of the scene: the crowd of eager youngsters in their neat jackets and swallow-tail coats and their odd saucer-like straw hats with big brims; the Elizabethan building behind, reminiscent of generations of floggings; and the bird's-eye background with the smoke of London just imaginable on the horizon.

The boys were thickest at the western corner of the school-house, beside the den of "Custos," commonly called Sam, dispenser of school paper and racquet-balls, bulbous-nosed, traditional. The crowd condensed itself into a single file of boys, in the order of their forms, ever walking towards the Master.

As each boy's name was read, he touched his hat, murmured "Here, sir," and slouched off with his hands in his pockets. The file was like a long wriggling snake, ever being decapitated and yet never growing shorter.

Usually the boys were only too glad to hurry off to their various avocations as soon as their names were called, but to-day the first hundred or so were seen to hang about the iron bars beside the entrance of the yard, waiting for some event to take place. At last it came to the turn of a broad-shouldered boy in flannels to answer his name.

Directly the name was called, the whole yardful of boys began to clap hands, and the hero of the hour, first deliberately undoing the elastic at the back of his head and then removing his hat, ran the few yards which separated him from the crowd at the gates, where he was received with a chorus of congratulations and many slappings on the back. It was the usual ovation to a freshly-nominated member of the school cricket eleven.

"That fellow," observed Sir Edward, as he explained the custom to Lady Giddy, "is tasting the sweetness of triumph in a way that few men ever do. With these boys, cricket is a fetish and there is an idolatrous reverence shown to the members of the cricket eleven, which is certainly never shown by the House of Commons to the Cabinet, perhaps not even by the College of Cardinals to the Pope. This boy's sole insignia are the right to wear white flannels instead of gray and blue and a speckled straw hat instead of a white one, but in this microcosm he is as absolute as a Cæsar and as infallible as a Sovereign Pontiff in their larger spheres."

"Pom-pom!" whispered Coryton in Violet's ear, at the end of this tirade.

"It is a pretty scene," she said, taking his elbow in her little hand affectionately. "Where are you taking me?" she added, as he led her up the school steps.

"Into the fourth-form room, to show you Byron's name. It is the only sight worth seeing here. After lunch I want you to send the others on to see the Chapel and the Vaughan Library and all the rest of it, while you come with me and pretend to watch cricket."

"That's all settled, is it, Poley?" she asked mischievously.

"Yes, Vixie."

They entered the old school-room, with its battered oak panels, and peered about among the historic carvings. They were both of the age which makes for Byron-worship, and they peered with the respect of pilgrims at the rough marks of the poet's jack-knife.

"How disgustingly modern!" she exclaimed presently, pointing to the top panels all round the room, where serried rows of names had been precisely carved, one underneath the other, by the village carpenter at half-a-crown a name. "I hope you won't have yours put up in that way. What possible interest can those have to any one on earth, except perhaps the man paid for measuring them out. Fancy the generation after next coming here to look for Walpole Coryton's name and finding it lost in that mechanical array."

"I promise you it shan't," he laughed, as they went out.

Tyrconnel greeted them enthusiastically outside. "Now, Vixie," he exclaimed, "you are mine from now until the clock strikes half-past two. I am like a poor ghost, who is only allowed to walk about for a certain period of time. When the fatal hour tolls, I shall be mewed up in yon prison house and Coryton will resume his sway."

"That's alarming," she laughed, starting full pelt down the hill towards the cricket-ground.

Coryton and Tyrconnel made off in hot pursuit, while Pimlico and Gaverigan piloted the rest of the party to the King's Head to order lunch.

That meal proved a great success, everybody having a regular schoolboy appetite and being in the best of humors. Violet sat between her two "best boys," as she called Coryton and Tyrconnel, and carried on a desperate flirtation with Pimlico across the table; Sir Edward and Colonel Lockhart grew reminiscent of their Harrow school days, while Lady Giddy discussed French novels confidentially with Gaverigan.

When it was time for Tyrconnel to go through his penance of spending two hours and a half in a stuffy school-room copying out the Latin Grammar, Violet showed herself unusually sympathetic, walking part of the way with him and talking eagerly of future meetings. She would try to persuade her uncle to come down again for another cricket match, but at any rate they would meet at Lord's for the Eton and Harrow, and Lord Baltinglass had asked her to Blarney later on.

"You won't forget me, Wilfrid?" she said, with a very plausible affectation of tearfulness, as they parted outside Wilbee's bookshop.

"The stars may fall and the angels be weeping—" he began, but she knew the quotation and was running off with a friendly wave of her parasol.

"Now for the other little fish," she laughed to herself, as she espied Coryton standing moodily outside the little circle of her friends near Mr. Wellesley's house. Sir Edward was proposing the usual round of sight-seeing, beginning with the Vaughan Library and ending with the reputed scene of Byron's meditations in the churchyard on the hill-top.

"I am much too tired for all that in this hot weather," Violet exclaimed as she came up. "You can all go and trot yourselves off your legs if you like. Poley and I are going down to watch cricket and eat cherries in the shade. I suppose we'll meet you at four-bill."

"What's that?" asked Lady Giddy.

"The roll-call," explained Sir Edward: "these poor boys have to go through that ceremony five times on a whole holiday. It doesn't give them much time to get into mischief, does it? Vi is getting to talk the language of the country quite nicely, isn't she?"

"Poley is such a capital teacher," she murmured, looking the boy full in the eyes.

"Where are you taking me to?" she asked him presently, as her programme was being carried out and the others had started off for the library.

"I want you to come and see my room, will you?" he said, leading the way into Mr. Wellesley's house as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"Well you *are* a cheeky boy!" she exclaimed with a slight flush and dancing eyes, following him all the same.

"You have had your name cut by the village carpenter after all," she remarked, pausing before one of the boards covered with rows of names that lined the staircase-wall; "I thought you disapproved of the practice this morning?"

"That was in order to have the pleasure of agreeing with you," he replied; "besides I had no choice, every

new boy finds that the house does it at his expense, the half-crown being deducted from his allowance."

"You are a cool boy, you know," she said, as they entered his room. "I think that's one of the reasons why I like you so much, Poley. I have a fellow-feeling for you, because I am accustomed to do pretty impudent things myself sometimes. The way you took it for granted that I would come up here was simply magnificent. I don't think I'd have come if you'd asked me any other way, and I certainly should not have come for anybody else."

"It is sweet of you to say that. I didn't at all take it for granted, though. I thought that was the best chance of getting you, and I am awfully glad it has succeeded."

"Well, I'm glad too. What a pretty room you've got!" she went on, walking round and peering at everything, taking down books, examining the marks of china and smiling at the extravagance of an Impressionist caricature of art. "I had no idea boys were so comfortable."

"They aren't," he replied. "I'll show you some other rooms presently more like bear-gardens than human habitations."

She sat on the window-seat, surveying the room critically. "It is very well arranged," she commented; "you have too many things in it, for the size, but one would scarcely notice it. That is the highest possible tribute to your taste. One should aim at getting the whole of Wardour Street into a garret and yet making it look as bare as a billiard-table. Even shabbiness is preferable to overcrowding. After all, I think it is more like a boudoir than a study. All those flowers suggest effeminacy. I have never quite made up my mind whether you are effeminate, or only lazy."

"Oh, effeminate, by all means. I have a theory that, to be really charming, no man can be too effeminate and no woman too masculine."

"I'm not masculine, please remember."

"I wondered whether you'd say that. You have a masculine mind, certainly. You are naturally rash, but you are the sort of person who doesn't make mis-

takes. You are at the same time utterly unscrupulous. Now, if I know anything of life—”

“Which you don’t.”

“If I know anything of life, that is a very powerful combination. Calculated recklessness is the philosopher’s stone in the nineteenth century.”

“You are very young to be such a philosopher,” she said, smiling.

“*Si jeune et déjà fils de ministre !*” he quoted.

She watched him curiously for nearly a minute.

“Do you know? I think our characters are very much alike,” she said at length. . . . “I see the others down there,” she added presently; “after you have given me a glass of that cherry-brandy, you can go and fetch them up. It might seem odd, if we were seen coming out of the house alone together.”

“In that oddness lies our safety,” he replied, holding the door open for her.

Meanwhile the hours had been going very slowly to Tyrconnel over his unproductive labors in the hot, sulky schoolroom. His face lit up with pleasure when at last the two and a half hours were over and he found Coryton playing at yard-cricket while waiting for him.

It is a capital game for spare moments and merits mention as a Harrow institution. The batsman is solely occupied in defending his wicket, he has no time to think of making runs. The bowlers are legion; anybody who happens to be about takes his turn; as soon as one ball has been parried another follows, and then another in breathless succession. Whoever bowls the batsman out is privileged to take his place. The beauty of the game is the quickness with which it goes along. In rapidity and variety of emotion it bears the same relation to real cricket that roulette or baccarat do to whist or betting on the tape.

When Tyrconnel came out, the yard was very full, and, seeing that Coryton was batting, he stood for some moments admiring the skill and alertness with which he defended his wicket, never trying to hit far, but never allowing any ball to take him unawares.

When Coryton saw Tyrconnel, he threw down his bat and cried out to a friend, “There you are, Williams,

you can have my innings. Pigeon, I'm your man. Poor old fellow!" he went on as he caught him up, "you do look pulled down after this inhuman torture, I couldn't neglect you for another instant. Let's start at once for Ducker. A bathe will do you all the good in the world."

The boys set off down the steep path to the football field. Tyrconnel wanted to hear everything that Violet had said and done, but Coryton preferred to talk about the Derby.

"I'm not quite satisfied about my book," he said, in answer to a tirade about Violet's laugh, "if Gone-away wins I shall lose a pot. Of course it's got no chance on the Two Thousand running, but horses are almost as ticklish as young ladies, though in a different sense. However, I feel more cocksure every day about Jumping Cat. I've a great mind to give the Basket-man a fiver to put on. It's a nuisance there not being any book-maker here one can trust, and if I sent to one of the Boulogne men, the answer might get intercepted."

"The Basket-man welshed Williams and Wilmot over the Cesarewitch," replied Tyrconnel, as they crossed the stile into the football field.

It was looking its best, with the sun lighting up the hay cocks, and along the broad path in the centre were endless boys, generally in twos and threes, going to and from the bathing-place, some with towels and others with bags of buns for consumption after the bath.

Coryton mentally compared them to ants. Tyrconnel thought of Jacob's ladder.

"How do you stand on the race?" the former asked presently as they sauntered on, drawing deep breaths of the hay-scented air.

"I've put my shirt on Sir Galahad. I'll back him against Jumping Cat, even money, if you like."

"All right, even tenner, one to win."

Tyrconnel took out a neat small morocco pocket-book and was proceeding to enter the bet in pencil, when a cheery voice sounded in his ear.

"Well, Tyrconnel, what have you got there?" and

Mr. Wellesley, who was hurrying down to the bathing-place to preside at a swimming-pass, snatched the pocket-book playfully out of his hand.

"Please give me that back, sir," the boy pleaded, "there are private matters in it."

Mr. Wellesley was about to do so, when an entry caught his eye: "Derby, G. £2 to £10 Gladiator." His face suddenly grew grave. "Here is your book, Mr. Tyrconnel, I have seen quite enough."

He was about to stride on, when a thought struck him.

"Were you betting with him then, Coryton?" he asked.

"No, sir, certainly not. I was giving Tyrconnel the address of a racket-shop he asked me for."

The statement was made so simply and straightforwardly that it was impossible to doubt it.

"Very well," the master assented, passing on; "Mr. Tyrconnel, I will see you in my study after lock-up."

"You are an unlucky beggar," Coryton began.

"You are an astounding liar," Tyrconnel replied, rather testily. "I can't stand untruthfulness. I don't know how it is I have liked you so much."

"Pshaw, when a man asks you indiscreet questions, you have a perfect right to lie. It is an acknowledged principle of ethics. Walter Scott denied the authorship of the Waverley novels point-blank, when the Wellesley of his day had the impudence to ask. And Walter Scott was an honorable man."

They entered the bathing-place, Tyrconnel a little disturbed by the incident, Coryton utterly unmoved.

"Ducker" was pretty full. Mr. Wellesley was marshalling his swimmers for the pass and a big boy was just entering the water with a sounding splash; but on the whole it was an atmosphere of laziness, most of the boys seemed to be lying about on the seats, on the pavement even, wrapped up in great rough bath-sheets, munching buns and basking in the sun. Even the boys in the water seemed very drowsy in their movements, for it was an exceedingly hot day.

After the bath our two friends got separated, Coryton walking up with Williams and Wilmot, two

boys in another house, from whom he wanted the odds against Jumping Cat for the Derby and a promise to join a card-party in Tyrconnel's room on the day of the race.

In the evening Tyrconnel had an unpleasant interview with Mr. Wellesley, who was at first inclined to send him up to the head-master on the charge of betting, but at length consented, in view of the way in which he had made the discovery, to commute the punishment to 500 Latin lines.

He had also to communicate the fact that Mr. Brooks had informed him of Tyrconnel's presence at the station, and that he declined to reduce the penalty he had imposed by a single line.

"I cannot say I am sorry for you, Mr. Tyrconnel," he said in severe tones, as he dismissed him, "you know you only had to ask my leave and I would have allowed you to meet Sir Edward at the station with pleasure."

"It's very hard lines, sir."

"Yes, yes, I dare say, but you must learn that you cannot break rules with impunity."

The next few days were days of toil for the unfortunate boy, for he was very anxious to get his lines done by Wednesday, when an extra-special card-party had been convened to his room in honor of Derby day.

The proverb about more haste and worse speed was exemplified in his case by the further calamity of a surprise visit from Mr. Wellesley while he was engaged in the process known as "tollying-up," or working by candle-light after the legal hours. Mr. Wellesley had seen the light in his room from the road when returning from a master's meeting, and punished him by tearing up his whole evening's work.

A light had also been burning in Coryton's room, but when Mr. Wellesley arrived he was already in bed, with his exercise for next morning carefully stowed away in his tall hat.

"You had a candle, Coryton," said Mr. Wellesley abruptly, as he entered.

"Yes, sir," replied Coryton simply, knowing instinctively that denial was useless.

"Well, it will not help you much, for I shall tear up the work you have been doing."

He went up to the table and destroyed several sheets of exercise paper which he found there, covered with Coryton's handwriting.

"You will have to get up early to-morrow morning and do it all over again," he added maliciously as he left the room.

Coryton waited until Mr. Wellesley's step was heard far down the creaking stair. Then he burst into a peal of hearty laughter, which lasted so long that Shephard presently came in from next door to see what was the matter.

"He has torn up my rough copy," said Coryton with another wild burst of merriment.

When Derby day came, Tyrconnel had finished his punishment and was in excellent spirits again, as he welcomed his friends after fourth school. Cards and drinks were produced and the poker, as usual, was placed in the door.

"Nobody's heard the result yet of course?" said Coryton interrogatively, as they all sat down. "Grey is to have a telegram and will hang about with it outside the house as soon as it comes."

The game went on for some time with varying fortunes. Williams and Wilmot were evidently nervous about the result of the race and played badly. Coryton, as usual, was utterly unpreoccupied and laughed gaily all the while, though his interest in the race was considerably larger than theirs.

After about an hour's play, Wilmot, who had been looking furtively out of the windows between each deal, suddenly exclaimed, "Isn't that Weller's coachman down there by the railings? Run and see what it is, Coryton, there's a good fellow."

Coryton needed no second bidding.

"That's Grey right enough," he said, after a glance out of the window, "I'll be back in two jiffs."

He had scarcely been absent longer than is implied by half that mysterious measure of time, when an authoritative knock came at the door. Williams and Wilmot had wished to wait for Coryton's return, but

Pimlico, who was losing, would not hear of it, so the poker had been replaced in the door.

"How quick he's been," growled Pimlico, who had only one bet on the race and disliked being disturbed.

Gaverigan, who was nearest the door, pulled out the poker, and a chorus of eager voices exclaimed, "Well, what's won?"

Then there was a moment of silence that could be felt, the sort of silence which immediately precedes the crash in some great cataclysm.

Mr. Wellesley stood before them, his upper lip trembling with anger and excitement.

"Williams and Wilmot," he cried in a choking voice, "what are you doing here? Leave the house instantly."

The boys obeyed sheepishly, looking very much ashamed of themselves. Mr. Wellesley watched them sternly, with his arm outstretched and pointing to the door.

When they were gone, he took up the cards two or three at a time, gravely tearing them in two and flinging them into the grate as he did so.

The boys had risen and stood about the room in uncomfortable attitudes. Tyrconnel looked annoyed but not frightened; Pimlico's face was inscrutable and, but for occasional sniffs through the nose, showed no signs of emotion; Gaverigan was whistling under his breath to conceal his feelings; Shephard was red in the face and inclined to be tearful.

After destroying the cards, Mr. Wellesley espied a bottle of claret and a bottle of cherry-brandy on a side-table.

An ominous silence reigned. Mr. Wellesley was too much agitated to speak.

He took the bottles and poured out their contents into a foot-bath, his hand shaking nervously all the while.

When he had done, he said in a low voice, "You will all be sent up to the head-master," and left the room hastily, shutting the door after him.

The boys remained silent for some time, sitting looking at each other.

"What extraordinary luck that fellow Coryton has," said Tyrconnel at last. "What a nose to choose that very moment to go down and talk to Grey."

The others laughed nervously.

There was a cheery knock at the door and that envied mortal burst in, with a grim smile on his usually unmoved face.

"Jumping Cat, Garibaldi, The Butcher," he cried gleefully, before he had time to realize the situation.

"Why, what's up?" he added, after a short, surprised pause.

"We are betrayed," replied Gaverigan, in tragi-comical tones.

"Who's been drinking all my cherry-brandy?" pursued Coryton, pointing to the empty bottle; "won't anybody tell me what has happened? Have you been raided by the police, or what?"

It was a long time before he would quite believe in what had taken place. When he did take it in, his first impulse was to raise a *Te Deum* to his lucky star.

"It is better to be born lucky, than rich or wise or good, my Pigeon," he remarked sententiously, after it had all been described to him at least a dozen times.

Then came a feeling of annoyance that there could be no more cards that term, but the joy over his miraculous escape kept predominant and, when he thought it over afterwards, he really felt more glad than sorry that the discovery had taken place. The victory of Jumping Cat in the Derby had put his finances more than straight and his absence from the fatal game would remove from the mind of Mr. Wellesley the germs of suspicion about him, which he knew existed there to some extent. Indeed the more he thought of it all, the more he liked it. Never for an instant did any feeling of sympathy for the sufferers cross his mind. He chaffed them about their probable fate until they got as nearly angry with him as anybody ever could.

"You'll get it hottest of all, Pigeon," he was saying when the lock-up bell rang, "I really never heard of such a scapegrace in my life as you are turning out. Extra-schools, betting-books, out of bounds,

tollying-up, and now this disgraceful orgy, this attempt to turn a respectable master's house into a low drinking saloon and dicing-den."

Coryton's jesting prognostications came true. Tyrconnel was subjected to long and anxious interrogation by his house-master and the head-master, and a public expulsion was seriously discussed. In the end milder counsels prevailed and he was "requested to leave," that is to say, sent away without the publicity and disgrace of a regular expulsion.

The other boys were degraded from their forms. The ceremony took place publicly at "bill." As it came to the turn of one of them to answer his name, the master motioned him to come up and stand on the school steps and wait until his form had passed. Then the boy took his place again at the head of the next form, answered his name, touched his hat and walked away. The ordeal would have been far more severe if the sufferers had not known that they possessed the entire sympathy of their audience, who viewed the proceedings with chill silence.

Coryton perhaps alone looked on with satisfaction, and many were the congratulations he received from those who had heard the story.

"I really think I must furbish up a votive offering for the altar of Saint Blaise, or whoever it is that patronizes poor gamblers," he said at last.

The term passed on uneventfully after the catastrophe. Coryton had an opportunity of renewing his flirtation with Violet at the Eton and Harrow match and, as no one else of his set had been allowed an exeat, he had all the running to himself.

The term came quickly enough to an end and, as he sat in the train leaving Harrow for the last time, he could not help marvelling at the singular good luck that had attended every incident of his life.

Even during the next fifteen months at Heidelberg it did not seem to fail him. It failed him perhaps for a moment at the time of his father's death, but that, he told himself a little later, was really a lucky stroke after all, for it left him his own master, free to put to the proof the paternal advice that his best friend was himself.

CHAPTER IV.

CAMBRIDGE.

“ The best of all ways
To lengthen our days
Is to steal a few hours from the night, my dear.”
OLD SONG.

WALPOLE CORYTON had quite settled down at Cambridge. The bitter memories of the weeks which followed his father's death, were safely locked in his breast, stowed away like skeletons in a cupboard. If ever he allowed himself to have a peep at them, it was only as a reminder of what was and might be, and to impress upon himself the necessity of keeping guard. Not that he needed such a reminder. He had laid his plans carefully, and they were developing themselves in a manner which came up to his most sanguine expectations.

His first year at Cambridge passed uneventfully enough. It is with most freshmen a period of transition—the half-way house between babyhood and B.A. hood—but with Walpole Coryton it had been rather a period of taking stock and settling down.

As he had calculated, when he enrolled his name upon the “ancient, royal, and religious foundation” of Trinity, his old Harrow friends quickly rallied around him. He was elected as a matter of course to all the best clubs and became part and parcel of the gilded youth of the University, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh.

One of the “new humorists,”—whose newness, say some, is more evident than their humor,—has divided undergraduate Cambridge into “bloods” and “smugs,” much as some one else once divided mankind into apes and angels. Lord Beaconsfield on a memorable occa-

sion wisely expressed himself "on the side of the angels." Coryton, wiser still, determined to make the best of both.

Roughly speaking, there are not two but three great classes, the aristocracy the plutocracy (if indeed there be still any distinction between the two) and the democracy. The first gives *cachet*, the second means cash, the third is *crachat*, and all these three—at least so Walpole Coryton argued—are necessary to a perfect life.

With the first two of them, he was already in touch; the problem was how to make use of the third. He solved it in this way. There is in Cambridge an institution known as the Union Society. Its influence in the University is altogether overrated by those outside. But to a man who aspires to political life, the training which it affords is invaluable. Coryton did aspire to political life, and he was shrewd enough to see that the Union might be utilized by him as a sort of field, in which to take a preliminary canter before settling down to the serious business of the race for name and fame.

He conceived the idea of becoming President of the Union—and having conceived it, he proceeded to carry it into effect. He became a frequent speaker at its debates. He united with a fluent and lucid delivery an engaging manner and a seriousness which he did not feel. He had the knack of appearing in earnest over everything. He was a Tory of course, as befitted the son of the late Judge-Advocate-General, but his Toryism was of a very elastic and progressive type, and he was a devout worshipper at the shrine of the Jumping Cat—that patron saint of latter-day politicians.

As a political speaker, he was very successful; he cultivated an extra-parliamentary manner, and affected an intimate acquaintance with the Tory Leaders. His Church speeches were excellent, and he was careful always to avoid wounding the Nonconformist conscience, as represented by the "pi" men from the Colleges over the border. They all had votes!

Coryton "kept" in large rooms on the King's Parade, the windows of which overlooked Henry VI.'s "hoary

regal fane," and gave exquisite glimpses of the blossoming college gardens and leafy backs. He had brought his Lares and Penates from Harrow with him to Cambridge and added to them. His shelves had been enriched, if not adorned, by the addition of several blue-books. On his walls were sundry flaring daubs by French Impressionist painters, which certainly had the merit of eccentricity: a crucifixion by Besnard, depicted on the Hill of Montmartre, with a Magdalene in *café chantant* costume; a Cochin China landscape by Louis Dumoulin with Cochin China hens in the foreground; and, for British art, a portrait of the late Judge-Advocate-General in Whistler-and-treacle style, by Mr. Walter Slick. There was also a group of the Government, of which his father had been a minor member.

Over the fireplace, by way of displaying hero-worship, were prints of Napoleon, Disraeli, Marlborough, and Ignatius Loyola; a bust in bronze of Zumalacarregrui and one in marble of Lord Byron; a large engraving from a picture of Charles II.; and a row of medallions of the Cæsars. All were in fairly close communion with the owner's character, in which the frank cynicism of the witty king, the self-conceit of the poet, the dash of the guerrilla-leader and the simple subtlety of the first Jesuit all found their part. It was not merely worship at the shrine of success; it was also a confession of faith in calculated foolhardiness, sincere insincerity and the vices as a means to an end.

If the elder Coryton—from his place above or below—could by some occult vision, have peered into his son's room, he would doubtless have been much touched by the post-mortem, filial devotion evidenced by the prominence of his portrait. But then, as Walpole said to himself, "He never was of any use to me when he was alive, he may as well be of some little use to me now that he is dead," and all these blue-books and ministerial groups helped to impress his supporters at the Union.

He would ask some of them to breakfast now and then—very early breakfasts, so as to get them out of the way before Pimlico or Tyrconnel or any other of

that ilk dropped in—and they would settle the affairs of the nation to their own satisfaction, the host doing most of the listening. And they always went away impressed with the fact that Coryton of Trinity was really a very clever fellow, though, of course, not quite so clever as themselves.

“Whatever makes you keep on the K. P., Coryton?” indolently asked Sir Lauder Forbes, an impecunious young Scottish baronet, whose almost girlish beauty had earned for him at Eton the pet name of “Dolly.” “Why don’t you come to Jesus Lane? Everywhere else is so far off.”

Coryton laughed and parried the question.

“Oh! I didn’t know, you see. When I came up, Joey Prior had taken the rooms for me, and it’s too much trouble to move. Next term I shall be in college.”

Truth to tell, he was rather glad to be a little “far off”; it gave him more time to himself and a freer hand. The things which were to Forbes and his set the *summum bonum* of Cambridge life—Athenæum Teas, “True Blue” functions, Cottenham meetings and so forth—were to Coryton only phases, to be utilized as means to the end he had in view—the advancement of himself.

The consciousness of this never left him; it regulated even the trifling incidents of his life—for he knew the value of trifles, and despised not the day of small things.

It was with him this evening while he dressed himself leisurely and sallied forth to join the “Yellowhammers.”

The Yellowhammers was a dining club at Magdalene, one of the many dining clubs of the little college down by the riverside, whose tutelary deities are Bacchus and Diana. But the Yellowhammers was the most select of all the Magdalene Clubs, so select in fact that its numbers were once reduced to two and never exceeded six.

It mustered about that number now, but there were guests beside, who brought the total number on this particular evening up to twelve. Although admission

was so difficult, the rules were very simple and were summed up in the obligation of each member to give a dinner during term. These functions were attended by all the other Yellowhammers, who solemnly arrayed themselves for the occasion in velvet coats with yellow satin facings and wore the club sash, garter-wise across their dress shirts.

The dinner to-night was held in Lord Pimlico's rooms on the left hand side of the Court. They were large, handsome rooms, probably two sets knocked into one—for there is plenty of space in Magdalene—furnished absolutely without taste, but with a large amount of comfort.

The walls were tapestried with some dull red cloth and adorned with a few sporting pictures, Hogarth's "Rake's Progress" in quaint black and gold frames, a somewhat indecent old print of Venus and Adonis (Shakespeare's rendering), a fox's mask or two, and divers bloodthirsty-looking weapons, presumably imported from the South Sea Islands. There were portières over all the doors, Smyrna carpets on the floor, and a number of very comfortable chairs.

Pimlico received his guests with boisterous hilarity, looking much the same as when we last saw him at Harrow, only he had broadened somewhat, his jowl was a little heavier, and his pimples had disappeared. He was an important personage at Cambridge, Master of the Drag Hunt, President of the "True Blues" and many other things beside.

The dinner was admirably cooked and admirably served. It would have passed muster at the Amphitryon. We mention this in passing, as certain lady novelists and others, with the assurance born of ignorance, have given to the world what they conceive to be orthodox pictures of undergraduate festivities—"cold suppers and cider cup," and heavy breakfasts, where the heroes of Ouida's "flashing oar," for instance, devour huge masses of semi-raw beef-steak.

There was nothing of this barbarism visible to-night. The wines and dishes alike were excellent. The table was graced with some fine old College silver and elaborately decorated with flowers—chrysanthemums,

gold and brown, fringed with dark leaves and sprays of maidenhair fern, a blending of the club colors which had taxed the resources of that fair florist Clara Wren, who had come round from Rose Crescent to arrange them. The name-cards and *menus* from Redin's were quite works of art in their way, with the device of the club in gold relief, the whole being daintily tied together with a knot of brown and gold ribbon. The light of the wax candles was tempered by pale yellow shades.

The guests, like the wines, were of the choicest brand. They were all undergraduates—with the exception of a genial little sporting doctor well known in Cambridge and the County as secretary of the Hunt, and a young Squire, named Spofforth, who had gone down a year or two before, and who had driven in from Fulbourn for the occasion.

The dinner opened merrily and, as the wine went round, the tongues wagged faster.

"What are you doing on Tuesday, Coryton?" asked "Dolly" Forbes. "Come and have a little dinner with me—some other fellows are coming, and then we'll go and see Sally Popkins in *My Sweetheart*. I have taken a row of stalls. She can't sing a bit of course, but she's got a rippin' figure."

"Can't, old chap, I'm very sorry. I have to oppose a resolution at the Union."

"The Union! what is that? Are you on the Board of Guardians?" broke in Pimlico.

"It is a brick building somewhere between here and Sidney," explained Forbes, with an elaborate affectation of ignorance, "isn't it, Coryton?"

"Yes," he said impassively, "it is. I suppose you go to Sidney for your dinners, Pim, like every one else; these are capital quail," he went on, helping himself as he spoke—"it is only Barber who knows how to do *cailles bardées* to a turn."

"But about this Union, Corry," persisted Forbes, "surely you can chuck it for once. It's Sally's last night, you know."

"Can't, old chap, awfully sorry—they'd never forgive me and I'm putting up for the Committee next

term. By the way, Pim, I shall have to instruct you where the Union is—you're a member, you know."

"Am I? Oh! yes, I believe I am. My guv'nor made me pay seven guineas to the place when I first came up, so that I might learn to speak there. 'Excellent practice for a public man,' he said. But what the devil do you want me to go there for?"

"To put me up for the Committee;—you needn't look so blank—it's only to write my name in a book. I'll show you what to do."

"But, my dear fellow, I never go there—won't Tyrconnel do as well?"

"No, no," laughed Coryton, "not nearly as well. He is not the son of the Marquis of Southwark, you know. You see I know my constituents. They are very democratic, but they 'love a lord.' You remember that little German Baron—half English—who keeps on Gaverigan's staircase in the New Court."

"Von Raggedback do you mean?"

"Yes, Von Raggedback. He will be president next term—at least he is going to put up for it. For ages he was proposed for Committee as Franz von Raggedback and he never got in; then some one remembered and wrote down his trumpery title and he headed the poll."

"What a lot of snobs," exclaimed Forbes with indolent disgust. "I wonder you trouble about them."

"We're all snobs more or less," replied Coryton blandly, "it is only a question of degree. That is why all the bounders in Cambridge wear the terracotta ties and cloth caps you started last term, Dolly,—it is only another variety of the same snobbery—and why Loucher swaggers about in riding-breeches at ten o'clock in the morning, though he rides like a tailor—one would think he slept in them. But tell me, is it true that you are going to play Prince Hal at the A. D. C.?"

"I am not sure, I believe so" (it was a peculiarity of this youth, that he was never sure of anything).

"Hullo, Pigeon," he went on, turning to Tyrconnel, who sat the other side of him, "what are you and the doctor looking so glum about?"

"The doctor's just been telling me about that chap who was thrown out hunting the other day—came a cropper at that ugly bullfinch, you remember—he's killed."

"Kicked, has he? Why, he didn't seem to be much the worse for his spill at the time. Did you attend him, doctor?"

"I did."

"Oh! then, that accounts for it."

There was a general laugh, in which the doctor joined.

"Doctor, you really ought to become a polygamist instead of remaining a gay bachelor."

"Why?" asked the man of few words, with a twinkle in his eye.

"You have helped so many people out of the world, it would only be fair that you should be made to repopulate it a little."

"My good fellow," he said in a voice of mock indignation, "you would put a premium on vice."

"Vice—what is that?"

The doctor held his glass critically up to the light before replying.

"Oh—er—the opposite of virtue I presume."

"And virtue?"

"Virtue," put in Coryton, looking down at his buttonhole, a yellow carnation and a copper beech leaf—"virtue is a struggle against the promptings of nature—vice therefore, I take it, means simply that one yields to them."

"I know a much better definition of vice than that," cried Pimlico, who was now slightly "on," but he was shouted down and his ribaldry became the signal for a general scrimmage. The doctor hurled the inside of a roll from the other end of the table and caught Pimlico full in the open mouth, just as he was leaning back, pealing with laughter.

"You're getting much too smart, Pigeon!" said a little, round, dark man, named Mauresk, mischievously, as Pimlico looked round for his assailant.

"Oh! it was you, was it?" Pimlico exclaimed, pelting Tyrconnel first with the flowers and then with over-ripe pears.

A wild tussle was meanwhile in progress between Spofforth and the doctor, who had caught him drinking up his wine whenever his back was turned. Williams and Wilmot were holding Forbes down on a couch and powdering his head with sifted sugar.

Coryton, who didn't care for scrimmages, presently suggested roulette, but Gaverigan protested that the toast-list must come first.

"The toast-list to-night is rather an original idea of my own," he said demurely during a pause in the hubbub.

"Oh! yes, let's have the toasts," exclaimed every one, "and then we'll wind up with a gamble."

Pimlico had intended to have the ordinary stereotyped toast-list,—*"The Queen," "The Guests," "The corps-de-ballet,"* and all the rest of it, but Gaverigan, whom he had called in to supervise the spelling, had suggested that every one should propose a toast "out of his head," and so everybody had come brimful with "prepared impromptus."

"Gaverigan, as you're the originator of this notion, you'd best lead off," said Pimlico, arranging himself once more in his seat at the top of the table, and planting his puffy hands on the arms of his chair.

"Well, gentlemen," said Gaverigan, rising indolently, "my toast is 'Change,'—there's nothing so jolly as Change."

"I prefer fives myself," whispered Williams to Wilmot, but everybody cheered and emptied his glass, while Pimlico, who thought he had now discovered his former assailant, rained sponge-cakes in quick succession across the table at the doctor.

When Coryton got up, there was a lull in the battle.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have to propose to you a toast, which I am sure you will all of you be delighted to honor. It is that of the very best friends we have, our only sympathizers in adversity, our safest advisers in perplexity, our surest pilots to success, our kindest masters and most faithful slaves, the only true gods:—Our Jolly Good Selves!"

"Bumpers then!" cried Spofforth and Pimlico in a breath.

"No heel-taps, Pigeon!"

"Good old Corry!"

"Long live the future Vice-President of the Union!"

Rarely had such enthusiasm reigned, even at a dinner of the Yellowhammers.

When Gaverigan finished drinking, he crashed his glass upon the floor, exclaiming, "After such a toast, this glass must never be put to vulgar use again." Everybody followed suit and Pimlico gave a drunken variation of the view-halloo.

"Now then a political toast," exclaimed Forbes as Mauresk rose to take his turn.

"Very well, gentlemen, I give you the toast of 'The Unemployed.'"

A murmur went round the room.

"None of your Radicalism here," growled Pimlico, who had now reached the aggressive stage.

"The Unemployed," Mauresk resumed impassively, "and long may they remain so!"

There was a roar of delight.

"And I beg to couple the doctor's name with that toast," added Spofforth slyly.

"Your turn, Pigeon, and be sharp about it."

"Gentlemen," said Pigeon impressively, "my toast is that of 'The British Conshtitoosh'n.'"

"Good old Conshtitoosh'n! Hi-tiddly-hi-ti-hi! Hark For'ard, Pigeon!" yelled the interrupters, "Whoo-oo-oop!"

"The Brit'sh Consht'toosh'n, genelum," he went on impassively, "is like a bird—," but he was not allowed to go on further and had to fight for his life with Forbes, to escape being hustled ignominiously under the table.

"That never struck me before," said Coryton to Mauresk, "the British Constitution is very like Pigeon. It means well, but only succeeds in making itself vastly ridiculous."

"You do it," Williams murmured to Wilmot, as the battle of flowers was languishing for lack of chrysanthemums.

"No, you do it," said Wilmot to Williams.

"All right," said the latter. "Gentlemen, I give you an old toast over again. I give you the toast of

‘Change’—a jolly quick change into the next room for roulette. It’s past eleven and we can’t stay here much after twelve, after all these rows we’ve been let in for lately.”

When either Williams or Wilmot said “we” they always meant themselves and no one else.

“Rot!” interjected Pimlico, who was in his own college and had no rules about gates to fear. “We’ll make a night of it. Come along. Who’s going to take the bank?”

And he led the way into the next room, where a full-size roulette-board was waiting invitingly upon a long table of green cloth.

Coryton arranged that he and Pimlico should go shares in the bank, Pimlico spinning and himself doing the paying out and raking in. With the rules in vogue at Cambridge, to be banker was usually a profitable matter, for the maximum was not made sufficiently larger than the minimum to admit of doubling up or any sort of systematic play. Moreover Pimlico’s roulette was of the old Homburg pattern with two zeros, and he had made a rule that, whenever zero came, the banker cleared the board, instead of only taking half as at Monte Carlo.

Liqueurs were handed round and the game was soon soberly in progress. Pimlico, with a big cigar between his teeth, whirled the ball with a dignity begotten of many drinks; Tyrconnel scattered coins all over the numbers with a recklessness unusual even for him; Williams and Wilmot were trying a little system of their joint invention upon the dozens and columns; Mauresk stood about smoking interminable cigarettes and staking half-sovereigns *à cheval* on the two zeros every time; Gaverigan was winning steadily over a long intermittence on *Passe* and *Manque* and grumbling loudly that the lowness of the maximum interfered with his operations.

“All right, we’ll make it a tenner limit, eh, Coryton?”

“If we do, we must raise the minimum to ten bob,” returned that astute youth.

Williams and Wilmot raised a shrill protest, but the rest were inclined to acquiesce. Coryton, however, cut

the discussion short by looking at his watch and announcing laconically, "Half-past twelve! I'm off."

This aroused Pimlico's indignation and he began singing, "We won't go home till morning," in an aggressive tone. But Coryton lost no time in dividing the proceeds of the bank (£35.15.0. clear profit for each) and Forbes and Mauresk gathered up their caps and gowns to join him in his departure.

The rest determined to stay on, Gaverigan and Tyrconnel because it amused them, and the rest because they had lost.

"I'm going to punt now," said Pimlico. "Who'll take the bank? You, Pigeon? All right! Come on."

Tyrconnel's bank was not so successful as the previous one. Williams and Wilmot got into the habit of announcing their stakes instead of placing them on the table and, at this stage of the night, their memories were often treacherous when they lost. Pimlico had obtained a raise of the limit to £20 and was staking that sum on each of the even chances every time.

When two o'clock struck, the banker had lost all his winnings and a good deal more besides. Williams and Wilmot, who had now retrieved their losses, expressed great horror at the lateness of the hour, and there was a general scurry to get home. Pimlico, Spofforth, and the doctor decided to stay and have a quiet game of poker—"to steady their nerves," as the doctor phrased it.

Gaverigan, Tyrconnel, Williams and Wilmot parted from the rest outside the college and made their way to Trinity, bemoaning the ticklish interview with the Dean, which this escapade would involve, and it was in a very subdued mood that they huddled together outside the great gate of Trinity, and pulled the porter's bell.

A sudden thought struck Williams and Wilmot simultaneously.

"We can all get in through one of our windows at the Bishop's Hostel. Run, you fellows, I can hear Hoppett coming to open the gate."

The two inseparables were round the corner in a trice.

"I shall stay here," said Tyrconnel. "The porter

might be suspicious if he opened the door and found no one here."

"I don't suppose I can climb those windows," said Gaverigan, hesitating. "However, I don't see why I shouldn't try," he added, suddenly making up his mind, as the noise of withdrawing bolts awoke him to a sense of the situation.

The porter was very sleepy, or he must have noticed the flutter of Gaverigan's gown, still well in sight when he opened the door. "Mr. Tyrconnel again!" he muttered to himself, as he scrutinized the sole remaining undergraduate, "when all but he had fled."

When Gaverigan reached the outside of the hostel, Williams had already climbed in by the window and Wilmot had got one leg in. The sight of the wall, over eight feet before the bottom of the window was reached, and the great iron bars above, appalled Gaverigan, who, like the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, made it his boast that he never took exercise.

There were two ways in. One was by squeezing round the side of the bars and was only practicable for a very slim person; the other was through a window two feet square, which only began when the bars ended, some fourteen feet from the ground.

Wilmot was forcing his way through the bars, and for some minutes it really seemed as if he would stick there. At last, by a superhuman effort, he wrenched himself through and sprawled into his bedroom head over heels.

Now it was Gaverigan's turn, and Williams peered through the window, telling him again and again how easy it was. And indeed he found it much easier than he had expected. He flung his cap and gown in first, got his feet on a convenient ledge near the ground, seized hold of the bars and found a drain pipe running down vertically, which helped him up to the window-ledge.

"Why, it's as easy as walking upstairs," exclaimed Williams triumphantly.

Then came the climb to the upper window, for after Wilmot's difficulties, Gaverigan hesitated to trust himself to the bars.

He felt that he was in a very disagreeable position, and thought of the possibilities of a fall, how the back of his head would cr-rash upon the pavement, how nicely a proctor would catch him if he chanced to come that way, and of a hundred alarming contingencies.

He heard a measured tread in the next street. "Quick," whispered Williams.

He nerved himself for a desperate effort, swarmed up the bars, got one leg through the top window and breathed again as he looked down into Wilmot's comfortable bedroom. Then the helping hands of his friends dragged him through and he was safe.

The little window had been smashed into smithers by his boot in the process, but that did not matter; for a very disagreeable encounter with the authorities had been providentially avoided.

"We'll have a bottle of fiz to celebrate the event," said Wilmot, rubbing his hands.

"All right! And I'll go and get the Pigeon," put in Williams. "What a fool he was not to come round too."

"Poor old Pigeon!" said Wilmot, "he'll get it pretty hot from the Dean. I shouldn't wonder if he got sent down."

"He always does get it hot, somehow or other," remarked Gaverigan, yawning. "He's too good for this world, bless his old soul!"

CHAPTER V.

GWENDOLEN.

As a crown she had the heavens, where the angels dwell ; her eyes were the white lotus-flowers, which open to the rising moon ; and her voice was, as it were, the humming of the bees.—DHAMMA-CAKKA-PPARATTANA SUTTA.

“So glad to see you, Mr. Coryton—we have heard of you often through Mr. Tyrconnel. I don’t know how it is that we have not made your acquaintance before.”

And Gwendolen Haviland held out her hand with a bright smile of friendly welcome.

Coryton bowed low over the extended hand, white, soft, and slim as a woman’s hand should be, with delightful little dimples here and there and pink-tipped, filbert-shaped nails.

“Mine has been the loss,” he murmured. Then suddenly he lifted his eyes and fixed them with bold admiration on the girl’s fair face, “how great the loss I never knew till now.”

There was something in his look, something in his manner,—she hardly knew what, perhaps it was the bald compliment—which jarred upon Gwendolen. Before it her straightforward purity instinctively recoiled. Yet she was prepared to like Walpole Coryton.

“Ah! you should say those things to my aunt,” she laughed with the same apparent friendliness, no trace of what she felt visible in her manner, “she appreciates them : I do not.”

Then, as if to atone for the ungraciousness of her words, she added cordially, “but now that you have once found your way to us, I hope we shall see you often. You do not know many people here,” she went on, glancing round the room—“No! Let me in-

roduce you to Miss Verity,"—and she indicated a damsel with red hair, a sallow complexion and limp, sage-green gown, who was sitting on an adjacent chair in an attitude she fondly believed to be early Italian, but which suggested a spinal curvature instead.

"You ought to get on well together," Gwendolen added mischievously. "You are very clever, Mr. Tyrconnel is always telling me, and she is very clever too—took a first class in all three parts of her Little-Go."

As she said this she turned aside to greet some new-comers leaving Coryton by the side of the sage-green maiden, faintly conscious of a rebuff. He disliked rebuffs and thenceforward he felt a sort of passive dislike to Gwendolen Haviland too.

Coryton was just entering upon his second year at Cambridge, but this was his first experience of the queer nondescript thing known as Cambridge Society, that is, such society as the wives, daughters, sisters, cousins and aunts of the University suffer to exist—intensely respectable, intensely dull, intensely exclusive—exclusive of course only in the sense that between the 'Gown' and the 'Town' there is a great gulf fixed.

Of one phase of this society the gathering was fairly typical. The long, low drawing-room of Professor Haviland's pretty house on the Newnham Backs was almost inconveniently crowded on this October afternoon. It was the first of Mrs. de Courcy Miles' At-Homes, which she held on every alternate Wednesday during full term. Here Greek met Greek and the lion lay down with the lamb; which, shorn of hyperbole, means that here the young blood among the University dons—for there is some young blood even in that effete body—met on neutral ground the eligible undergraduates who came hither to see Mrs. de Courcy Miles' pretty niece.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles was a sister of the Professor. She had come up to Cambridge ten years before, to take charge of his house and his motherless daughter. And, having come, she remained, while Gwendolen gradually grew up, blossomed into lovely womanhood, and the Professor slowly became mustier and more

professorial. But Mrs. de Courcy Miles did not change; she was one of those people with whom time seems to stand still. The bloom on her cheeks deepened a little perhaps—as it will do, for the rouge-pot, like dram-drinking, is apt to grow on one—but her youthful figure was just as youthful as of yore, her skittish laugh just as skittish, her tripping step just as tripping. How she managed it was a mystery. But manage it she did.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles was the widow of a Colonel in the Indian Army, who had gone to Paradise, said the profane, because he knew he wouldn't meet his wife there. Any way he had gone, and his widow was left lamenting—not at his departure, but at the fact that he had left her nothing but a small pension to live upon. However it was no use indulging in vain lamentation. She came home and established herself—for her means would allow of nothing better—in Kensington-beyond-Jordan,—a terrible locality without the pale of civilization, where one has to give three shillings to a cabman to drive one to an indigestible dinner. A place where all the people one meets—host and guests alike—rejoice in double-barrelled names, which mark of the beast, as a well-known statesman with a future behind him (who by the way rejoiced in one himself) once remarked, is a synonym for mediocrity and dullness.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles had a double-barrelled name, as suited the *genius loci*—possibly too she was mediocre, but she certainly was not dull, even her worst enemies could hardly accuse her of that. She silently suffered many things in her dreary suburb until the welcome summons came from Cambridge.

She suppressed all mention of Kensington-beyond-Jordan and gave out boldly that she had been travelling on the Continent. Her arrival took Cambridge society by storm.

The strait-laced wives and daughters of the Professors, Tutors, and Heads of Houses could not understand Mrs. de Courcy Miles at all—and, not understanding her, they regarded her with mingled feelings of envy, curiosity, dislike and suspicion. But they could not

ignore her—the sister of a Regius Professor! Then too she possessed a very aggressive individuality of her own. She flaunted her tailor-made garments, her walking-stick, her gaiters and her youthful make-up in their solemn drawing-rooms and figuratively snapped her fingers in their faces.

“Positively gaiters, my dear,” sighed the wife of the Dean of King’s to the wife of the Tutor of Jesus’.

“And then her low-cut bodices, positively indecent, my dear,” said the wife of the Senior Proctor, holding up her hands in pious horror to the wife of the Esquire Bedell—“What a terrible example for that sweet girl!”

But her aunt’s eccentricities did not seem to make any difference to the “sweet girl.” Gwendolen Haviland was acknowledged to be the most beautiful girl in Cambridge, and her beauty was heightened by her apparent unconsciousness of the fact. She was not really unconscious of it, of course—no girl can remain in ignorance of what her glass tells her every time she looks into it—but apparently she was so.

She had an oval face, with a coloring like a wild-rose bloom, a perfectly chiselled nose and a mouth moulded like the mouth of one of Carlo Dolce’s Madonnas. There were great shadowy depths in her brown eyes, and her hair, springing wavily from the roots, was coiled in a loose knot low on the nape of her slender neck. When she stood by the side of the crabbed old Professor, one wondered how such an ill-favored tree could have borne so fair a blossom. But Gwendolen had inherited her beauty from her mother, and with it a certain religious turn of mind. She looked at life and its duties through the medium of a highly colored light, and that she did so was certainly not due to any external training—for her father was too much wrapped up in his books to heed her, and her aunt’s schooling—such as it was—was all the other way. Her ideas on many things were intolerant and unformed; her horizon was a narrow one, but it had all the thoroughness born of that same narrowness. With her, things were either right or wrong, she knew no middle distance, and though this division is apt sometimes to

be arbitrary in the complex circumstances of modern life, yet there can be no doubt that it greatly simplifies matters for the divider.

Tyrconnel had known her since his first year at Cambridge. He had seen her one evening in the chapel at King's whither he had gone—as freshmen do go once in a way—to listen to the music. She was standing in one of the massive oaken stalls in the choir, the pale light of the tapers flickering before her, the dark woodwork as a background, the billows and waves of melody, as the choir chanted the *Magnificat*, rising and falling around her.

The face riveted Tyrconnel's attention. It seemed to him the incarnation of "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

It haunted him.

As luck would have it, he met her a few days after at an evening party, given by his Tutor's wife—one of those dismal entertainments known as "Perpendiculars," where well-meaning dons and callow undergraduates mutually bore one another. Mrs. de Courcy Miles' quick eyes noticed his evident admiration of her niece,—the future Lord Balinglass of Blarney was not to be neglected; she bore down upon him; and in a brief time Tyrconnel became a constant visitor at the pretty house on the Newnham Backs.

Gwendolen and he would talk over many things in the dimly-lighted, flower-scented drawing-room, while Mrs. de Courcy Miles dozed over a risky French novel, or kept discreetly out of the way. They became comrades and very good friends. He would show her MSS. of poems and dissertations which he had written; for Tyrconnel had a literary vein, which he had never shown to any one else, and she would give her opinion with that dogmatic downrightness, which encouraged and yet dissatisfied him.

Gwendolen appealed to all the better impulses of his nature—she was his good genius, so to speak—something shrined away in the inner sanctuary of his heart too sacred for common mention. It was this feeling which made him hesitate a good deal before

introducing Coryton to her, though he often spoke of him. In point of fact he never introduced him. It was Mrs. de Courcy Miles, who came across Coryton at her friend Lady Giddy's house near Henley during the Long. He was clever, the son of the late Judge-Advocate-General, the friend of Lord Pimlico, that dear Mr. Tyrconnel and a whole host of eligible young men. Mr. Tyrconnel must bring him to call. So he brought him and here he was.

From his coign of vantage by the Girtonian's chair, Coryton leisurely surveyed the room. He knew several of the men, none of the women. And there were a great many women present, mostly Cambridge pure and simple, but not a few from the county around. Even the Duchess of Puffeballe had once driven over from her "place" the other side of the Gog-Magogs and left a card. It henceforth reposed at the top of Mrs. Miles' card-basket forever.

However much the dons' wives might abuse Mrs. de Courcy Miles, they all agreed that it was right for them to go to her parties.

"Somehow or other she gets such nice men. I can't think how she manages it," said the wife of the Vice-Chancellor, who had a whole tribe of unattractive daughters.

Mrs. Miles' skill in this respect filled with impotent rage and envy the hearts of feminine Cambridge. But those laugh who win, and Mrs. Miles did not mind. Their spite added to her triumph.

"I know they hate me," she wrote to her friend Lady Giddy, with whom she had scraped an acquaintance in Simla long ago, "and the feeling I assure you is mutual. Meanwhile I smile and eat their dinners, which are not so bad—in fact one may say of Cambridge that the dinners are good, the dons dull, but the women—my dear Gerty, the women are *awful*! Not a gown but what might have come out of Noah's Ark—and ideas to match."

The would-be æsthetic Girtonian was a little puzzled all this time. The handsome young undergraduate, who had put down her tea-cup and come solemnly back to her chair, did not seem inclined for

conversation. Yet she was not of a retiring disposition ; she had ventured several sallies, but somehow they had fallen flat.

"I think," she began again tentatively, "I have seen you at Professor Mealie's lectures."

"Oh yes, of course," Coryton said, stifling a yawn, "I remember seeing you there." He hadn't the faintest remembrance of having done so, but that didn't matter. "I do put in one now and then. You were," he hazarded a guess, "at the last one, weren't you?"

"Yes," she rattled on, now fairly started—"I am always there. I wouldn't miss one for worlds. This course about Marlborough is quite too intensely absorbing. The Professor throws such a lurid light on the fallacies of Macaulay, does not he? You are going in for the History Tripos, like myself, I suppose."

"I never go in for anything. I take things as I find them," he said half absently.

At that moment a burst of laughter came from the opposite corner of the room and, turning, he saw Mrs. de Courcy Miles in the centre of a little group smiling towards him. He answered the smile, and catching sight of the Baron von Raggedback, a Prussian Peer who was at Trinity, standing by, he took him forcibly by the arm and introduced him to the fair Girtonian before he knew where he was.

"The Baron is much interested in the History Tripos," he said with a charming smile. "I am sure you will find in him a kindred spirit."

And then with a bow he went off, leaving them together. Coryton was never rude to any one, whether he could get anything out of them or not. But there certainly was nothing to get out of a red-haired young woman, who posed like a bad edition of Ellen Terry and who prosed about her tripos.

"What are you all laughing about?" he asked of Mrs. Miles.

"A story of Mr. Funnie-Ffoulkes," she rejoined, beaming on the little cleric who was holding her teacup. Funnie-Ffoulkes was by way of being a wit. He tried to model himself on Capel and the suave

monsignori of the old regime. But Cambridge is not Rome, neither was the drawing-room of Mrs. de Courcy Miles a gilded saloon of the Borghesi. Nor was Funnie-Ffoulkes a monsignore. Far from it. He was only the Dean of St. Bridget's.

"Are you going to Lady Catchbois's dance next week, Mr. Coryton?" inquired Mrs. Miles, changing the conversation.

"I do not know Lady Catchbois."

"Oh! That is a detail. Mr. Tyrconnel is going and you are a friend of Mr. Tyrconnel. I will ask her to send you a card."

"As a friend of Mr. Tyrconnel?" asked Coryton, the corners of his mouth curling upwards ever so slightly.

"No, foolish boy, as a friend of mine of course."

The little group around them had drifted away. They were almost alone, but not sufficiently alone for the lady's purpose.

"Come," and she motioned him to follow her into a queer little recess built out and curtained off at one end of the room—in reality a very deep bay-window. The upper lights were filled with stained glass and there was a *jardinière* filled with crimson tulips and fragrant lilies of the valley.

"This is my chapel," she said, "at least I call it so, a holy of holies which only my especial friends are allowed to enter. I hope you appreciate the privilege."

"I should be base indeed if I did not," he answered, seating himself on a low pouf at her feet.

Really with her back to the light, her "bloom de Ninon" and her youthful figure neatly clad in a soft mouse-colored gown trimmed with fur, Mrs. de Courcy Miles might have passed for thirty-five. She didn't feel a day older just now with this handsome youth at her feet looking up into her eyes.

Coryton possessed that caressing manner which women love, and there was a certain sensuousness about the dark beauty of his face, which perhaps appealed to them even more than his manner.

Mrs. Miles had something to say to him, but she hardly knew how to begin.

"So you will come to Lady Catchbois's," she said again by way of opening the ball.

"I thought that was settled," he replied blandly. "Your wishes are my commands. I shall be delighted, since you are going. I should not care to go if you were not."

Mrs. Miles simpered.

"Flatterer!" and she gave him a tap with her fan.

"One never flatters when one tells the truth."

"And do you always tell the truth?"

"Oh! always," he answered, meeting her gaze with frank candor, "unless there is a reason for doing otherwise. It is so much simpler, you know."

"Quite so, but the reservation is important."

"Ah! dear Mrs. Mallaby, must you be going so soon?" This to the Vice-Chancellor, who with two overgrown daughters had just come up to say good-bye. "On Thursday is the meeting, is it? And you have secured the Bishop for the address. How delightful—Oh! I shall be *quite* sure to be there. I am lunching at Magdalene Lodge, but I will come on immediately after. Good-bye."

"That woman," she said with a glance at the retreating figure, "always reminds me of the XXXIX Articles incarnate. Her piety, like her nose, is too aggressive. And yet I have heard it whispered that before she married the Vice-Chancellor—no one quite knows where she came from, you know—she had a *vie orageuse*. And now she is so devout, would you believe it?"

"I should not be surprised. Most women caress penitence after hugging sin," said her companion quietly.

Mrs. Miles lifted her eyebrows with a little jump.

"Where did you pick up that sentiment," she cried.

"You speak quite like a man of experience."

"Experience! What is that?" he asked smilingly.

"The name women give their intrigues, is it not?"

His listener lifted her shoulders this time and regarded him in blank amaze. "You are certainly a very unusual undergraduate," she said.

Coryton bent his sleek head, "May I return the com-

pliment and say that you are a very unusual mistress of a professional household? " he asked.

Mrs. Miles laughed by way of reply. She did not detect the covert sneer, but she began to think that possibly this youth might not be quite so easily moulded to her purpose as she thought. She did not speak again for a moment. Her eyes wandered absently across the room.

Coryton followed her glance and an amused smile flitted over his lips as he saw where it rested. Tyrconnel and Gwendolen were sitting side by side. She was talking to him earnestly—almost fervently—and, as he was listening, his face turned towards hers in the soft-shaded lamplight. The shade was not so great but that Coryton could see on his face a look he had never seen there before.

Mrs. Miles turned her head and their eyes met.

"You were thinking—" she began.

"Of the same thing as yourself. Great minds often run in the same direction."

She laughed a little constrainedly.

"Mr. Tyrconnel is often here," she said, taking up the thread of her thoughts; "he feels quite at home with us now."

"So it appears," he replied drily.

"You are, he tells me, his greatest friend. Tell me, do you think?—" here she paused and looked down.

"That he means business," said Coryton, filling up the hiatus in his most insinuating tones.

Mrs. Miles shot him a swift glance beneath her lowered lids, and put her fan up to her mouth.

"You are very frank," she said—"brutally so, in fact."

"We live in a brutal age," he answered with a charming smile; "did I not say I always told the truth? But I have not answered your question—oh! yes," he went on, with playful protest, "that was your question surely. Well, since you ask me, I think he does."

A pleased light shone in his companion's eyes.

"What makes you think so?" she asked.

"Because he says so little about her, for one thing;

because he sees so much of her, for another. Two sure signs of a woman's influence."

"Well—well," said Mrs. Miles with a pious air, "I cannot say that I disapprove. He is a young man of very high principles."

"High principles," echoed Coryton with an air of candid innocence. "High principles are synonymous with high teas, cold dinners on Sunday, missionary meetings and such like middle-class virtues, are they not? Well—" he pursued, shrugging his shoulders, "I do not know about his high principles, they are too abstract for me to deal with, but without doubt he is the only son of Lord Baltinglass of Blarney and heir to his wealth. Those are concrete advantages enough. But these little affairs are not all on one side. What does Miss Haviland say?"

Mrs. Miles shook her head; it suited her to ignore the earlier part of Coryton's remarks.

"I cannot say," she said presently. "Gwendolen is not an ordinary girl. One cannot judge her by ordinary rules. You see I am a mother to her"—("Heavens!" thought Coryton, "what a mother!")—"and a father also one might say, for the Professor, though great on the differential calculus, is as ignorant as a child in affairs of the heart, or"—noticing a faint smile on her companion's face—"of the world. One must leave things to take their course and hope for the best. One only wishes for their happiness. . . . I am so glad to have had the opportunity of talking with you, Mr. Coryton. You are so clever and, do you know?—I value your opinion very highly."

Coryton bowed low.

"And now," she said, rising, "I really must look after my guests. They will be wondering what has become of me. Don't forget about Lady Catchbois's party; and will you come and dine with us first? Mr. Tyrconnel is coming and then we can all go on to the dance together."

"What fools women are, even the cleverest of them—in fact the cleverer they are, the more easy they are to fool," thought Coryton as he murmured his thanks. "Does this old woman seriously think that I am going

to further her clumsy game, run the risk of angering Lord Baltinglass and of losing my useful friend—for that girl's influence would be the death of mine—in return for a few twopenny-halfpenny compliments, a badly-cooked dinner, and a second-rate dance? Not if I know it"

"Well, Pigeon," he said later, as they were walking homeward together across the Backs, "you seemed to be going it pretty strong this afternoon. You'd better have a care or you'll burn your fingers before you know where you are: that old woman wants to nab the future Lord Baltinglass of Blarney for her pretty niece."

Tyrconnel laughed uneasily and kicked the dead leaves beneath his feet. The "fire of the autumn" had pretty well burnt itself out by this time, the leaves lay in a golden shower beneath the great elms, whose branches, bare for the most part, stretched weirdly athwart the leaden-hued October sky. The air was laden with the pungent odor of rotting leaves.

"You mean Mrs. de Courcy Miles, I suppose?" he said at last.

"Oh! is that her name? 'I had forgotten it. Don't go too far. Remember, what would Vixie say?"

A red flush burnt itself on Tyrconnel's cheek, hardly visible to his companion in the fading light.

"I don't think Vixie would mind," he said awkwardly, "I don't think she cares—besides Gwendolen Haviland is so different to Vixie, you know."

"Quite so, like a cup of cold water after a highly spiced draught. Cold water is an excellent thing, but it is apt to pall on the palate if one takes too much of it. By the way, what was your guardian angel talking to you about so earnestly this afternoon?"

"She was only saying what she has often said before, that *noblesse oblige*, you know,—that life is full of opportunities for good—that one ought not to waste one's energies simply on selfish pleasures and all that sort of thing—and—by Jove! Coryton," he wound up with an energetic swish of his stick through the air, "I believe she is right."

"Perfectly right," said Coryton calmly, "obviously right. One has heard something very like it all

before, but that does not matter; it is better to repeat old things well than to invent new ones—and much easier. I often do it myself. What else did she say?"

"I cannot tell you," answered the other doggedly, "you do not understand—at least you *will* not. You would only make a joke of it all, and I—I do not care to joke about Gwendolen Haviland. She looks at things in a very different light to you and me. She is a religious girl."

Coryton checked the laugh which rose to his lips. It was as well his friend could not see his face. They crossed the river and walked on a little way in silence.

"Religion is an excellent thing—in woman," he said meditatively, "all women should have a devotional vein running through them; it is such a comfort to them, and it helps to pass the time. A free-thinking woman is an abomination, she jars on one's sense of the fitness of things. Yes, certainly, all women should have a touch of religion."

"You are not arguing that religion is only meant for women, are you?"

"Oh! certainly not, religion is very useful to men, both in this world and the next. It is a very powerful lever, they are only fools who ignore it. Never say anything against religion, my dear Pigeon, if you wish to prosper."

"You are incorrigible," said his friend, laughing in spite of himself. "You upset all one's preconceived ideas of right and wrong, and yet somehow one believes in you and likes you all the time. How do you manage it, I wonder?"

"Possibly because I always say what is passing in my mind—the things which other people think. Frankness consists in telling the truth—but not always the whole truth," he added.

But his companion did not hear the reservation.

"I don't believe you are half as bad as you make yourself out," he said.

"The devil is not as black as he is painted," quoted Coryton. "But then he doesn't paint himself."

They had walked up Mill Lane and were on the

quaint K. P. by this time. The square old Saxon tower of St. Benet's loomed behind; the horizon in front was blurred by the hideous, *hôtel-de-ville* façade of Caius. The lamps were lighted and the shop windows, full of gaudy blazers, groups of photographs and pictures, wore a festive air.

A little crowd—chiefly women—was emerging from the pinnacled gateway of King's. Evensong in the Chapel, which does duty at Cambridge for a Cathedral service, was just over, and the boom of the great organ could be heard faintly sounding across the court. Coryton, followed by Tyrconnel, turned into Bessie Masterman's—"the freshman's snare"—and bought some cigars.

"Well, what shall we do to kill the time?" he queried when they came out again—a flirtation with Bessie had long ago lost its charms for him—"you are going to the Caledonian dinner to-night, aren't you? Forbes has asked me too. But that's not till eight o'clock. Let us turn into Barrett's and have a game of billiards."

CHAPTER VI.

THE APOSTLES.

Cherchons donc à voir les choses comme elles sont, et n'ayons pas plus d'esprit que le bon Dieu.—FLAUBERT.

THE undergraduate with literary aspirations is about as precocious and insufferable a prig as may be found in the whole republic of letters. His ideas are suburban rather than of Grub Street; his idols are underdone poets and incomprehensible essayists; his principles are the give and take of inept admiration; the goal of his ambitions is to take a high degree, go to London and be elected a member of the Savile Club.

The most pretentious coterie for such young men at Cambridge is a highly exclusive society known as the Chit-Chat. It meets once a week in the rooms of all

the members in turn, when the host reads a dogmatic paper on a subject of frivolous solemnity and the other members discuss it. Punch is brewed, dried fruits are consumed and the elub snuff-box is handed round. Every member is bound by honor and tradition to consider all the other members "*frightfully* clever" and to speak to outsiders with bated breath of his membership as the greatest honor which the University had to bestow.

Stay, there is a greater honor yet, but it is too supreme even to be whispered in the ears of the profane. The Chit-Chat has an inner circle, consisting only of the twelve most *frightfully* clever men in the University. They modestly style themselves "The Apostles" and are theoretically only known to each other in that capacity, though they usually take precious good care that the secret shall be only a secret of Polichinelle.

The Chit-Chat and the Apostles have been in existence to minister to the vanity of at least three or four generations of undergraduates, but the sluggish Cam still flows on unfired.

"I want you to reserve me Sunday evening, dear boy," said Coryton to Gaverigan as they walked home together from a card-party at Williams' and Wilmot's rooms.

"By all means. What is it? Poker in your rooms or a prayer-meeting in Victor Sexton's, O thou man of many wiles?"

"No, an infinitely funnier study in human nature than either."

"Human nature! That means vice or something equally humdrum, doesn't it? To my mind 'human nature' is a contradiction in terms. Anything nakedly natural disgusts me. What is there so repulsive as a human being, who seeks to be natural and consequently only succeeds in being foolish?"

"For my part," returned Coryton, smiling, "I prefer natural people. One knows just what they will do under given circumstances and one can plan accordingly. But then I am a student of fools, a morologist—to coin a word."

"You are quite right to study fools, if what you labor for is success. For my part I don't believe that anything is worth while. There is no heaven save pleasure, and no hell save satiety."

"But all pleasures are of nature: from women to 'wittles.' Success is my greatest pleasure, and that is why I pursue it."

"Philistine! Success is the triumph of art over nature. There is no pleasure in anything where nature has not been completely overshadowed by art. Natural food means bananas or raw potatoes washed down by rainwater. It is to art that we owe our *tournedos Rossini* and *Mouton Rothschild 1874*. But you haven't told me what you propose for next Sunday."

"I want you to come to a meeting of the Chit-Chat."

"Why, what on earth is taking you there?"

"I am a member."

Gaverigan looked at Coryton with a curious smile and whistled softly to himself.

"Whew! You are a marvel! Is there a single pie in the whole 'Varsity, where you haven't got your thumb? But why bother your head about such small fry? They can be of little enough use here and none hereafter."

"Every one has his uses—down to the President of the Catt's Debating Society. But will you come? They want to elect you a member, but you needn't accept unless you like."

"And I am to come for inspection, as Mauresk did last week. All right, but I won't promise to be on my good behavior."

"No one would ever expect that of you. Mauresk made a very good story out of his inspection. The show isn't quite so funny as all that. Still it may amuse you, and I know you only live to be amused."

When Sunday came, Gaverigan had forgotten all about the Chit-Chat and was lying comfortably at full length before his fire, enjoying his greatest pleasure of doing absolutely nothing, when Coryton burst in on him like an avalanche.

"You are a nice chap!" he exclaimed. "The Chit-

Chat has been waiting for you half an hour—a thing utterly unheard of in its whole history. You are really too provoking.”

“My good chap,” returned Gaverigan, scarcely turning at his entrance. “I wish you wouldn’t burst in like the north wind. You have chilled me to the marrow. I vow I won’t stir an inch until you have pledged me in a bumper of this port. It’s really not bad—for Cambridge.”

“All right, but for Heaven’s sake hurry up!”

“Well, where are we to go?” said Gaverigan gloomily; “I sincerely wish I hadn’t said I’d come.”

“It’s in the rooms of a man named MacRonald, in the Old Court. He’s really rather a clever chap. Older than most undergrads. Come up from Glasgow University or some such place. Wears a truculent yellow moustache. Never came nearer civilization than Newcastle before his matriculation here, and yet has passable manners—outrageously artificial of course, but then you like artificial things.”

“He’s ‘*frightfully* clever,’ I suppose, like all the rest of them?”

The rooms were very large, like all those in the Old Court at Trinity. Oak panelling gave them a certain air of solid wealth, which was not borne out by the sparse and rather gimcrack furniture, evidently intended for an aspiration after new-fangled art by one who did not quite understand it. A long table in the centre of the room was covered with coffee cups of all sorts and conditions of patterns, which conveyed the impression that “alas, master, they were borrowed.”

MacRonald came up smiling, with one hand grasping an end of his Randolphian mustachio. He had cultivated very carefully the appearance of being entirely at his ease on all occasions, and had succeeded in acquiring it to the satisfaction of superficial observers. Coryton used to say that his manners were those of a man who is always in expectation of being kicked downstairs, but then Coryton was a keener observer than most people.

“It is a great pleasure and honor to see you under

my poor roof," MacDonald said to Gaverigan with what he fancied was old-fashioned politeness; "we had half begun to fear we were forgotten."

"Forgotten! 'Twere impossible to forget the high honor of this invitation. I fear me I am not so punctual as is my wont," returned Gaverigan, imitating MacDonald. But the humor—as usual—was lost upon the Scotsman.

"I found him sitting over the fire with a bottle of port," put in Coryton brutally.

The procedure at a meeting of the Chit-Chat is to devote the first hour to conversation, or "chit-chatting,"—whatever that may be—then to proceed to the election of new members, and to wind up with a paper read by the host.

MacDonald's idea of entertaining had the merit of simplicity. Directly a man came in, he would take him to somebody, introduce them and plant them on a sofa or two chairs close together. Before ten minutes were up, he would pounce upon the man again, whisper in his ear "I want to introduce you to So and So," and carry him off to a tête-à-tête with somebody else. There was a game of General Post going on all the time, and MacDonald certainly showed skill in never leaving anybody by himself, or with a man who evidently bored him. At a pinch he would even go further and suggest subjects when the conversation seemed to be flagging.

MacDonald first introduced Gaverigan to an effeminate young man named Freeman. His father was a partner in a well-known firm of wholesale haberdashers, and had thought to turn his son into a gentleman by sending him to a public school and university. The result had been a curious hybrid, in which the shop-walker strain struggled with the veneer of gentility. Freeman had no notion how to talk or where to place his hands and feet, but he had a gushing, almost girlish disposition, and was liked by people when they got to know him. He was good-looking, almost aristocratic-looking, with a Roman nose and slight, well-curled moustache, and so long as he did not open his mouth, he made an impression on a stranger. He had what

members of his father's firm would have called a "good address," which was only rendered tolerable by his intuitive preference for the eloquence of silence. Like so many who have alloyed a pretentious education with middle-class home-life, he had no sense of proportion, mistook for sentiment what was only mawkishness and for philanthropy what was but foolery. He was eaten up with fads, from socialism and esoteric Buddhism to long hair and vegetable foods.

Gaverigan took to him at once. The great quality to him in an acquaintance was that he should be a good audience, and that was Freeman's strong point. Finding that he had a faddist to deal with, Gaverigan poured into his willing ears archaic individualism and epicurean theories, and he was just completing the process of captivating the impressionable youth by avowing a belief in astrology, when MacRonald came up and whispered in his ear that he was anxious to introduce him to Thomas Llewelyn Morgan. This was whispered with some pomposity, as though the proposition were an unusually advantageous one.

"I have known him ever since I was a boy," said Gaverigan, following his host, though he hated Morgan, "his father was up here with mine once upon a time."

Gaverigan at once rose several feet in MacRonald's estimation, for Thomas Llewelyn Morgan was a shining light in this coterie and was even whispered to be of the mysterious inner circle,—the Apostles!

They found him seated on a window-seat, discoursing atheism to a select circle of admirers. "The Bible," he was saying, "is not only a mass of inconsistencies and absurdities, but such hopelessly dull reading, such dismally bad literature."

"There I don't agree with you," said a man named Emery, who was a Positivist by creed and an editor of the *Cambridge Review* by profession, and therefore of course an authority both on religion and literature. "The Bible isn't half a bad book if one can once get rid of his prejudice against it. People who have had it crammed down their throats during childhood can't be expected to approach it impartially. I have had it

bound in yellow calf, and really, when I come to peruse it like that, I find it far better reading than either the Talmud or Omar Kayam."

"What title did you put on the cover?" asked Morgan contemptuously. "Perhaps if you spelt Bible with a little b, it might serve."

"I haven't put a title on yet. I want a good one, if anybody has ideas."

"Of course we all have ideas," said a man called Belgium indignantly, and he scratched a red shock head, without however eliciting any.

"Poems and Fables of the Semites," suggested Gaverigan in a still, small voice.

A delighted shiver passed through the little audience, and MacRonald rubbed his long bony hands with glee, as he trotted off to arrange further introductions. Morgan looked sulky at being eclipsed on his own territory.

Coryton had been very much bored meanwhile, talking to one of the most precious of the Apostles, a colorless young man named W. P. Jones, known to the intellectual circles of Cambridge as "W. P.," and whose "*frightful* cleverness" consisted merely in a knack of passing examinations in Latin and Greek. He had a thin, husky voice, which he used in the most supercilious way, as if it were amazing condescension to consent to speak at all. He was insignificant-looking, with a pug nose and mutton-chop whiskers, but it was the custom of the Chit-Chat to take men at their own valuation, and his was an unusually high one even for these select circles.

Coryton had been flattering him more unblushingly even than his wont, and was beginning to wonder whether there was anything he would not swallow. He had told him with what engrossing interest he had read his article on Pindar in the *Cambridge Review*; he had alluded to him to his face as the cleverest man in the 'Varsity; he had even hinted at unparalleled personal beauty, and suggested the Chit-Chat paying a first-class artist to paint his portrait,—but the man had accepted it all as gospel, without turning a hair.

Coryton was beginning to admit that his powers of

blarney must at last have reached their limit, when a welcome relief was afforded by MacRonald taking him away for introduction to Mr. Scott, whom Coryton had heard much about, but somehow had not yet met.

Mr. Scott gave what turned out to be somebody else's lectures in English literature in the hall of Trinity College some half a dozen times a term, to a select audience of Cambridge Apostles and Newnham disciples. The Chit-Chat swore by him and probably contributed to his vogue. In London, despite persistent log-rolling in the *Lickworm Gazette*, he was only known as the writer of washy sonnets of doubtful scansion and as the editor of certain English classics, which required no editing. At Cambridge he was Sir Oracle to a great number of crude young men. He was a podgy little person with glutinous hands, one of which he placed in Coryton's without the least attempt at pressure.

"I am very pleased indeed to make your acquaintance," he said in an oily voice. "I think I have seen you sometimes at my lectures."

Coryton took the cue and began to express his enjoyment of them, though in reality he had never been there. "I was especially interested in what you said about Milton," he said, "though I confess I do not entirely share your admiration of him."

Mr. Scott's face gathered into a frown. Then he smiled pityingly and said, "Let me hear what you have to say," in the tone of a master asking a lower boy to show cause why he shall not be flogged.

"I take Voltaire's view," said Coryton boldly, for he was getting tired of heaping Pelion on Ossa in flattery of tenth-rate prigs; "he accused Milton of obscurity, unnecessary length and entire absence of interest, and he pointed out that he was despised by his contemporaries."

Mr. Scott gasped at what seemed to him sheer blasphemy and was about to administer a reproof, when a movement in the room gave warning that the proceedings were going to begin and every-one settled himself to attention.

"Our first business," said Thomas Llewelyn Morgan, the Secretary, with more than the solemnity of a

Cabinet Minister, "is to proceed to the election of new members. I hope it is understood by strangers present," and here he looked biliously at Gaverigan, "that our proceedings are strictly private. If any stranger does not consider himself bound in honor to treat them as such, I have to request that he will withdraw."

He made a long, awkward pause to enable Gaverigan to do so, but as the latter made no move, he proceeded to read out the names of the candidates proposed.

MacRonald took advantage of the pause to whisper in Gaverigan's ear: "That warning is on account of Mauresk. He behaved in a most ungentlemanly way. Came as our guest. Accepted our hospitality. And then went about everywhere, telling the most extravagant tales about what we did."

"Ha! ha! ha! Mauresk is not a respecter of persons," laughed Gaverigan.

"No, but one imagined he was a gentleman," returned the Scotsman severely.

"Mr. Mauresk of King's College," Morgan was reading, "proposed by Mr. W. P. Jones of Trinity College and seconded by Mr. Drake of King's, has been withdrawn."

The announcement was greeted with ironical cheers, in which Gaverigan and Coryton, who knew that Mauresk would never have accepted election at the hands of this Society, joined heartily.

"Mr. Bertram Paine of Trinity College is proposed by Mr. MacRonald of Trinity and seconded by Mr. Edward Freeman of the same college," pursued the inexorable Secretary.

There was a pause, while the Chit-Chats pondered among themselves who should cast the first stone.

"Is he *frightfully* clever?" asked a man named Crust presently, sniffing the air.

"I don't think he scintillates particularly," said an overgrown King's man named Drake, his thick lips quivering nervously as he tried to think of a joke and failed.

"He wrote some *frightfully* clever articles in my

paper, the *May-Bug*," said MacRonald with some humility, "and really he did coruscate the night he came on approval."

"Heavens!" whispered Gaverigan to Coryton. "I trust I am not here 'on approval.' Are they all watching to see whether I 'scintillate' or 'coruscate'?"

"No, be quiet. You are watching them to see what funny things they do."

"And he isn't going in for the classical tripos," growled The MacSnorter; "I don't believe any one can be *frightfully* clever who doesn't. Paine is a history-man, I think."

"Yes," assented Chortle, "a man whose intellect is nourished on history only is like a boy brought up to eat nothing but bath-buns. Both necessarily lack stamina."

After a long discussion in a similar strain, it was decided to defer the election to next term, and MacRonald proceeded to read his paper. It was not devoid of cleverness, though weighed down by Scottish conceptions of humor. It was entitled "The Riddle of Life" and consisted of emasculated Rabelaisian language, with a few aphorisms modelled on Voltaire peeping out every now and then like truffles in *pâté de foie gras*.

The aphorisms, which were evidently meant to be the strong point of the paper, were of the kind which prompts men to exclaim "How true!" rather than "How strange!"

"*When a woman weeps, she is about to deceive; when she smiles she has betrayed.*"

"*Reputations—like men—are born of women, and women are not hard to deceive.*"

"*When you say 'Good-bye, Colonel,' in America, every man within hearing distance takes off his hat; if you exclaimed 'Pretty scamp!' in a London drawing-room, every woman would curtsy.*"

"*An amorous man is amorous to his friend's wife.*"

"*Love is the distemper of humans.*"

"*The man who has a beautiful wife never lacks friends.*"

"A philosopher is one who asks other people questions to the end that he may answer them himself."

And so on.

Signals for applause were never neglected. "Wonderful!" Drake would gasp to The MacSnorter; "*Frightfully* clever!" Quid, the Johnian History Lecturer, would telegraph with his eyes to Charles of King's; "Ripping!" was the comment of Belgium, who had not yet got into the Chit-Chat jargon.

Coryton's face was that of a Sphinx all the time, neither enthusiastic nor bored, but when the essay came to an end in a splutter of scarcely intelligible fireworks, he was the first to rush up and congratulate the author with dulcet emphasis.

A desultory discussion followed and then the assembly of prigs gradually melted away across the Great Court in twos and threes, still keeping up their priggish conversation.

As Coryton and Gaverigan walked across the court together the latter asked,

"What are they all going to get out of this, do you suppose?"

"Mutual admiration here," replied the other with a shrug of his shoulders, "and universal contempt hereafter."

"But they are all coming men, aren't they?" said Gaverigan, laughing.

"Coming men who never come. Or if they come at all, it will be as third-rate ushers in fourth-rate schools, quill-driving clerks, or literate 'ghosts' for illiterate hacks and quacks, doomed to spend their lives flitting on the top of a bus between the suburbs and the British Museum."

The which in point of fact they did.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE MAY WEEK.

Talk to women as much as you can. This is the best school. This is the way to gain fluency, because you need not care what you say, and had better not be sensible.—B. DISRAELI.

LADY GIDDY had brought Violet Tresillian to spend the "May week"—so called because it is in the middle of June—at the house of Mrs. de Courcy Miles. Coryton, Tyrconnel, Gaverigan and Lord Pimlico were asked to meet them at dinner and take them on to the First Trinity Ball afterwards. Lady Giddy was an old friend of Mrs. Miles—at least to all outward appearances. But it was the sort of armed friendship, founded on knowing too much, in which there is no love lost.

Mrs. Miles had had to scheme and manœuvre with even more than her usual dexterity to get Violet up. For some reason or other everybody assumed that she was a great heiress, and as she was a "devilish pretty girl" into the bargain, she was in great request among hostesses.

Violet had quite determined to come up to Cambridge for the May week and did not care much where she stayed. Lady Giddy thought it would be better fun to take a suite of rooms at the Bull, but Mrs. Miles made such a point of it and put on the screw so mercilessly, that at length she had to give way.

The dinner-party was quite a success, everybody being in the highest spirits. Coryton took in Miss Haviland, with whom he was now intimate after a fashion. They always treated each other with cordiality and had even got to discussing questions of ethics in a way which tickled Coryton immensely, when he

thought over it afterwards. But each was more than half conscious of a lurking dislike in the mind of the other.

Tyrconnel sat between Gwendolen and Violet. The dinner bored Violet. The professor, who was on her other side, made it his business to "draw her out;" and, though that was a process she was always very clever at baffling, it prevented her monopolizing Tyrconnel as she had intended doing. He too, tiresome boy, seemed at first to have no eyes or ears for any one but Gwendolen. However, before the entrée was reached, Violet contrived to telegraph instructions to Coryton.

He, understanding her wishes almost before they were expressed, engaged Gwendolen in a discussion on Puseyism, a subject which interested her so much that she left Tyrconnel's last remark about cotillions unanswered and turned right round in her chair to thrash the question out thoroughly with Coryton. Violet pounced on her opportunity, as a cat might pounce on a mouse, failed to hear the Professor's question about the "Ballad of Lord Bateman," which he had given her to read, and proceeded to win back Tyrconnel to her humble service.

"You bad Pigeon," she said, shaking a finger at him, "you haven't spoken more than three words to me since you came in, and we haven't met for at least nine months. Are you huffy with me, or what?"

"I was talking to Gwen," he answered sulkily.

"Yes, Gwen tells me that you and she are great allies," she said, without a shade of annoyance in her tones; "she seems an awfully sweet girl, which is unusual in such a beauty."

The Pigeon was mollified at once. The next best thing to talking to Gwendolen was talking about her, and his heart warmed to Violet for her appreciation of his idol.

"Do you really think so?" he exclaimed; "I—I didn't think you would care much about her."

"Why do you think so badly of me, Pigeon?" she asked in low, sad tones, looking him full in the face with big glistening eyes.

"I am a beast, Vixie," he said, after a long pause, feeling that he had been very rude and unjust and disagreeable; "I didn't mean to be nasty to you, only you see I am a good deal changed since we used to know each other. I am beginning to see that life is a serious thing, and I am half afraid—more than half afraid—that we shall never be the friends we were."

"Oh! Pigeon, don't say that. We will always be friends."

"Yes, but I know you don't like serious people. I have often heard you say that serious people are like soda water, either flat or flatulent, according to their age."

"For pity's sake, don't murder my epigrams like that."

"And you said a serious young man was like a rotten egg, offensive to his surroundings from overhatching and serviceable only for political meetings."

Violet burst into a ripple of laughter.

"This is *too* killing," she said, leaning back in her chair,—*"the Pigeon to be taken seriously, the Pigeon in the rôle of 'the good young man who died'!* Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"What are you two making so merry over?" inquired Lady Giddy, speaking across the Professor, whom it was everybody's habit to ignore and who had not been spoken to for over twenty minutes.

"Pidge has been telling me that parody of Mr. Warton's about 'the good young man who lied,'" said Violet hastily.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles pricked up her ears and asked to have it repeated, but Tyrconnel was so evidently confused and annoyed that she did not press the point, and a diversion was speedily made by the Professor, who was in a great hurry to take advantage of the general lull in the conversation, in order to hear his own voice again.

"Well, Miss Tresillian," he said, in the loud tones habitual to the deaf, "and what did you think of the 'Ballad of Lord Bateman'? I think you know the present holder of the title. If you are likely to be seeing him soon, I hope you will do me the favor of accept-

ing the copy I have lent you, in case you have an opportunity of showing it to him."

Violet expressed her thanks in the language of nods and smiles and then turned again to Tyrconnel, who still looked hot and disconcerted.

"You mustn't be annoyed with me for being amused, Pigeon," she said, in the soft voice which he had never been able to resist; "you made your announcement with such a melodramatic air, it quite took my breath away. Of course, as we grow older, we all of us find life more serious. I expect you will find me a good deal changed too, when we have had a few quiet talks."

Tyrconnel looked up in great surprise and his old devotion to Violet came back with a rush. She too had pondered and wondered over the dark problems of life and had been through the deep waters. He longed to hear from her lips the result she had arrived at. Gwendolen was all very well as a spiritual guide, but she had always been one of the serious ones of the earth and could not make allowances for the old Adam of a character, to whom excitement was one of the conditions of existence. She was often provoking by the inflexibility of her "counsels of perfection." Violet, with a desire to do right thrown in, would be indeed a comrade.

Violet read in his look that she had hooked her fish and at once began to throw her flies in other directions.

"Now, Mr. Gaverigan," she said to her *vis-a-vis*, "I am going to turn the tables on you. What are you and Lady Giddy enjoying so richly? I have been talking very seriously to Mr. Tyrconnel and now I really do want to be amused."

"It's only a little tale about Coryton."

"How very odd," said Mrs. de Courcy Miles from the other end of the table; "Lord Pimlico has also just been telling me a funny tale about Mr. Coryton."

Mrs. de Courcy Miles had a knack of always keeping one ear open for any conversation in which Lady Giddy was, however remotely, engaged.

"Oh! come now," exclaimed Coryton, laughing

unmirthfully, "I think I shall begin to tell funny tales about you fellows. Mrs. de Courcy Miles, did you ever hear the strange story of Lord Pimlico, the drag, the fair lady and the Proctor?"

"No. We'll have a scandal-bee. Everybody think of a startling story about everybody else."

"Shall I begin, my dear?" inquired Lady Giddy in suave tones, which were intended to give her hostess an unfriendly warning.

"No," replied that lady coldly, "I see Lord Pimlico has something on the tip of his tongue."

"It's nothing much," said Pimlico, speaking hurriedly, "only about the last time Coryton and I went over to Newmarket together. On the platform a bobby told us we'd been spotted by sharpers. S'pose they thought we looked mugs. Anyhow, when the train started, there they all were and great fun we had listening to 'em. I was in one corner and Corry in the corner furthest off. Imagine my amazement, after about ten minutes, to see him stretch out a sovereign and bet he could spot the lady. Of course he lost. Then he turned crusty and wouldn't bet any more, which amused the boys hugely. I thought, 'Well he's lost his quid and there's an end of it.' But not a bit of it! At the first stoppage out he got. I sat in my corner saying nothing, without the faintest idea what he was up to, but I noticed the boys were a bit uneasy. Presently back comes Coryton with a couple of bobbies and a guard and a porter or two—quite a gang of 'em. In the quietest way in the world he points to the josses next me, who had won his money, and says, 'that's the man.' 'Wot d'yer mean?' he answers. 'You know well enough,' says the bobby, 'you've been cheating this gentleman out of his money.' 'Not a bit of it,' he answers, trying to bluster, 'we only 'ad a little game o' kyards.' 'All right,' sings out the bobby, and then he turns to Corry and says, 'D'you want to give him in charge?' 'No,' says Corry, 'I only want my money back.' 'Very generous of yer, I'm sure,' says the man, with a murderous look, whipping out a handful of sovereigns and giving him one,

Then I thought it was about time to clear out, so Corry and I travelled in the guard's van the rest of the way, and Corry was in a blue funk of being ducked in a horsepond as a welsher all the while he was at Newmarket. He told me afterwards that he'd been taken in by the dodge of turning down the corner and really believed he was going to cheat the man when he betted with him."

"Oh! come now," protested Lady Giddy, "you are all giving poor Mr. Coryton a very bad character. I don't believe he's anything like so black as you paint him."

Now this was precisely the opinion which Coryton had been diligently striving to implant in Gwendolen's mind all through dinner, and not without success.

"I believe, Mr. Coryton," she said impulsively, "that you are ashamed of your good impulses and that all the cynicism you impart to your conversation is merely to conceal your natural kindliness and generosity."

"You exaggerate my poor merits," he said with humility.

"No, and I feel I owe you an apology for having misjudged you. It is as well to be quite frank. I thought you exercised a bad influence over Mr. Tyrconnel, and I felt it my duty to advise him not to confide too implicitly in you. He has a blind belief in you, Mr. Coryton, and he is very young for his years."

"And you think I take advantage of his innocence for my own ends," said Coryton with a curious smile.

"You must not judge me too harshly. I feel that I was too hasty in coming to my conclusions," she said, in a slow, painful way. "It will be a lesson to me. I will explain my mistake to him, and I trust that you will consent to our being friends in future—real friends I mean."

There was a look of triumph in Coryton's eyes.

"My dear Miss Haviland," he said, "I have never desired anything better. But may I not suggest that you are in perhaps too great a hurry to believe in my immaculate intentions? You may change your

view about me just as rapidly again to-morrow and that will be awkward now that we have sworn eternal friendship."

She did not notice the sneer that just flavored his remarks, like the tiniest suspicion of garlic in a salad; for she was in a very serious mood, and when she was in a serious mood, she always fancied every one else was serious too.

"I have done wrong," she said contritely. "I know it is very wrong to be so quick to think evil of any one. The fact is, I had never met people, who tried to make themselves out worse than they are. It is all new to me,"—she looked up at him with a half smile,—“I hope you will forgive me."

"It is I who have to ask forgiveness, if I have unwittingly deceived you," he said with a profound bow.

"Do look at the way that little ecclesiastic has been crumbling his bread," Lady Giddy was whispering to Gaverigan, as she pointed to Funnie-Ffoulkes; "he seems terribly nervous under the fire of Miss Connecticut's chaff."

"Like Sidney Smith," replied Gaverigan, laughing. "Don't you remember he said, 'I always crumble my bread when I sit next to a bishop; and when I am next to an Archbishop, I crumble it with both my hands?'"

"No, I don't remember, you rude boy; I wasn't going out to dinner parties in the days of Sidney Smith. You are really getting as frank as Mr. Tyrconnel in telling one exactly what you think."

"One needn't have been there to remember a story, any more than the little boys who sing a ribald distych on the fifth of November were present at Guy Fawkes' execution."

"Now you are coming round to your Legitimist doctrines, and you know they bore me. It all happened so very long ago."

"Well, now you will escape being bored any more," he said, rising, as Mrs. de Courcy Miles, having at last succeeded in catching Lady Giddy's eye, was pushing back her chair noisily and flouncing towards the door.

When the ladies reached the drawing-room, Mrs.

Miles carried off the American girl to her "Holy of Holies" and Violet, who wanted a private talk with Gwendolen, expressed an eager desire to hear Lady Giddy's new Spanish-guitar songs.

"You won't get her to sing until the men come in," said Mrs. Miles, standing behind a sofa, with her arm in Miss Connecticut's, as a preliminary to carrying off that unwilling young lady.

"Oh, yes, why not?" said Lady Giddy, getting up to fetch her instrument. She always liked to disappoint her dear friend Mrs. Miles, if she could.

"Well, it'll be practice for you, I dare say," said the latter, carrying off her prey.

Lady Giddy sought out her guitar and fondly spread out the array of ribbons of many colors attached to the instrument, each of which she boasted represented a separate conquest. The whole array served to suggest a small regiment of admirers, but Mrs. de Courcy Miles' story was that they had all been bought one morning at Marshall & Snellgrove's by Lady Giddy herself.

That lady was soon trolling forth a song about the *Bolero*; Miss Verity was skilfully isolated behind a palm-pot by Violet, and Gwendolen found herself let in for one of the "private and confidential" conversations, which she was so fond of inflicting upon her undergraduate friends.

Violet began with a torrent of gush, which experience had taught her was best suited for a tête-à-tête with a goody-goody girl.

"I have been longing for a quiet chat with you, my dear Gwendolen,—I may call you Gwendolen, mayn't I? I have heard so much about you during the last two years, and it is strange, isn't it, that we have never met before? Now we really must make up for lost time and I am going to be frightfully fond of you and see such a lot of you, if you will let me."

Gwendolen was completely taken aback. She had not been attracted by Violet, in fact had begun with a slight instinctive antipathy, which she had fancied from the first was returned. But her loyal nature had prompted her to check the unfriendly feelings

almost as soon as they were formed, and her recent revulsion of feeling about Coryton had put her in the frame of mind that is inclined to think the best of everybody.

Violet had two objects in view; she wanted to make Gwendolen fond of her—that was always good policy and it cost so little effort;—but above all she wanted to find out how far the girl had entangled Tyrconnel. Keeping to her usual tactics, she kept the subject she had in view until the last, mentioning and discussing first all their other friends in an animated way, taking care to say amiable things about everybody.

She approached the subject of Coryton with a good deal of diffidence, as she had understood from him that he was not popular in this quarter. However, to her surprise, she had hardly mentioned his name, when Gwendolen began to speak almost enthusiastically about him.

“I was a long time getting to know Mr. Coryton,” she said, “and at first there is a thick crust of cynicism and reserve, which is not easy to penetrate, but I believe he is really a high-principled man, though perhaps overmuch given to pleasure.”

Violet raised her eyebrows an imperceptible millimetre and then dropped them again rapidly as a happy thought struck her. To get confidences one must give confidences,—whether or not they are true ones is a secondary consideration. *Do ut des* was her motto as well as Prince Bismarck’s.

So her face beamed with delight as she thanked Gwendolen for her warm praises of Coryton, and gave her to understand, under a strict pledge of secrecy, that she was more than half engaged to him. Then, striking while the iron was hottest, she began to speak flatteringly of Tyrconnel and asked half a dozen leading questions about him in rapid succession, while Gwendolen was still touched by the subtle compliment of making her the recipient of such a confidence so soon, and was therefore more or less taken off her guard.

It was a delicately revised version of the old confidence trick, and, before the men came in, Miss Tresil-

lian had gathered that Gwendolen was over head and ears in love with Tyrconnel, that she had set herself the task of reclaiming him from bad ways and evil companions, considered herself in some sort his terrestrial guardian angel and meant to marry him in two or three years, if he proved that he could keep straight in the meanwhile. The chief mistake in her estimate of his character was that she had taken rather too seriously his present religious craze and assumed to be chronic a phase which is as necessary to the emotional development as distemper is to the canine ; she underestimated the power which his love of excitement had to shatter his best resolutions ; and, where he really had a strong will of his own, she only thought him obstinate.

By the time the men came in, Violet had ascertained all she wanted to know. Lady Giddy was singing a Bulgarian love song, with the refrain "*Ti si moia, moia, moia!*" (Thou art mine, mine, mine!) and, as Coryton came in, she sang a variation, using the word *Moi* (mine) in the masculine and looking him full in the eyes. When she had explained the line to him, she said she should expect him to get her a new ribbon for her guitar in return for the compliment.

"Will you let me destroy all those you have there, and provide you with a complete set of white ones?"

"Ugh! why white ones?"

"Because they are the symbol of innocence."

"And would contrast so well with me."

"You are incorrigible, Lady Giddy, it is hopeless to try to pay you compliments."

"Well, will you give me one white ribbon to add to my collection?"

"No. It must be all in all or not at all," he replied, folding his arms dramatically.

"You are a very ambitious boy," she said with a pleased look and began to strike up "*Setu fosse per me 'na chitarra*" with a distinctly naughty look in her eyes, that nearly made Violet explode as she caught sight of it.

"Well, I think it is time for us to be putting our cloaks on," said Mrs. de Courcy Miles, emerging sud-

denly from her sanctuary and bearing down upon Lady Giddy with scant ceremony. "It is past ten o'clock and the carriages have been round some time"—they were only four-wheel cabs, but that didn't matter. Most of Mrs. de Courcy Miles' geese were swans. "One doesn't care to be too early at these sort of things," she went on explanatorily, "but we must be there before the Duchess of Puffeballe arrives." This for the benefit of Lady Giddy. "If we didn't know her so well it would be different. Gwendolen dear, the Duchess told you when you met her at Magdalene Lodge she would be there, didn't she?"

"Yes," said Gwendolen, flushing a little at the exhibition of snobbery, "I believe I told you so before, Aunt."

"And I am sure *I* have been told so several times," said Lady Giddy with a spice of malice, gathering up her train.

A minute or two later they were all packed in the cabs, trundling along to the Guildhall.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST TRINITY BALL.

When Love is kind,
Cheerful and free
Love's sure to find
Welcome from me.—TOM MOORE.

"You haven't asked me for a dance, Mr. Coryton," whispered Lady Giddy as they met in the vestibule at the top of the red-carpeted stairs which led to the Cambridge Guildhall. They were waiting for Mrs. de Courcy Miles, whose toilet apparently required a good many finishing touches in the cloak-room.

"I never dance," he answered languidly. "Why should one? I am like the first Lord Holland, I never do anything which some one else can do for me and I

never do to-day what I can put off until to-morrow. But you will sit out a dance with me and let me take you in to supper, won't you?"

"You do not deserve it, for I am sure you can dance if you like. It is only affectation. In town they say no one dances now but the very young men and the very old ones. But I hardly expected to find that at Cambridge."

"The men who *can* dance are generally to be found standing against the wall. That will be my rôle to-night," laughed Coryton.

"As a mural decoration I suppose, you conceited boy," retorted Lady Giddy with a flash of her fan. "But here comes our hostess—pinned up at last."

Mrs. de Courcy Miles gathered her party around her and sailed up to the top of the room. A valse was just over as they entered the ball-room, so they had a clear space and were the observed of all observers. Mrs. de Courcy Miles was supremely happy. She had the two prettiest girls in the room in tow and some of the smartest men. Her appearance created quite a sensation. They had come in good time, not too soon. The Duchess had not arrived—in point of fact she had never intended to come.

Mrs. Miles put up her lorgnettes and surveyed the motley crowd.

"A good deal of imported material, my dear," she remarked to Lady Giddy. "These balls are always rather mixed. You must not judge of Cambridge society from what you see here. It is much more select, and much dowdier."

"There is a good deal of dowdiness here to-night," retorted Lady Giddy. "Good gracious! who *are* those extraordinary creatures bowing to you now? I never saw such gowns in my life. Do look—one of them has a high dress close to her chin and no sleeves, the other has sleeves, and, well—no dress to speak of! Oh! this is very amusing! Tell me who is that object yonder with a sort of fender on her head, and flowers growing out of the middle."

"Some town person I believe," rejoined Mrs. Miles with ineffable scorn, "the wife of a solicitor I think.

I wonder how she managed to get here? Ah! there is Mrs. Bellamy—I thought there could be no mistaking that old brocade. And there are Belinda and Ceraminta with all the boys round them as usual. . . . No, Mr. Sainsbury, I really cannot dance yet. I have to talk to such lots of people. What would every one say? But I will give you one later on if that will do. Shall we say number fourteen? Very well. . . . What a ravishing valse this is. Dan Godfrey's Band of course . . . how well they are playing." . . .

"Where is Miss Haviland?" inquired Pimlico at this juncture in an injured tone. "I hope she's goin' to dance with me."

Pimlico did not care much about Gwendolen. She had opinions, he did not care for women with opinions. He never listened to them. "Why listen to a woman's drivell?" he said to himself with good-humored contempt—it didn't much matter what they thought, or didn't think. But Gwendolen was a "good-looking filly and could step out well," and just now he felt in a dancing mood.

"I'm sure she will be delighted," gushed Mrs. Miles.

After all Lord Pimlico was the Marquis of Southwark's son—a much greater peer than Lord Baltin-glass of Blarney, with an enormous rent-roll and a pedigree which was not invented by Burke.

"Ah! here is Gwendolen!" she exclaimed. For at that moment her niece, who had been valseing with Tyrconnel, came to a standstill near them.

"Gwendolen, dearest," she said suavely but in the tones of "She who-must-be obeyed," "Lord Pimlico wishes you to give him a dance."

Pimlico scribbled his initials on Gwendolen's programme, opposite the next dance, and then surrendered her to her partner again.

"You needn't have given him a dance," grumbled Tyrconnel as they revolved round the room again. "I wanted you to keep them all for me. You know I did."

"My aunt wished me to do so," replied Gwendolen in her precise manner, "and he is one of our party. I could hardly have refused without being rude; though

I confess I do not like Lord Pimlico. He seems to have no ideas beyond stables and kennels. And yet he is a great friend of yours. How I wish that you——”

“Yes, I know,” interrupted Tyrconnel, with a foreboding of what was coming and dreading a lecture. “I will do all you wish if you will only keep me all the rest of your dances. Promise me.”

“You can have one of the extras if you like,” rejoined Gwendolen demurely.

“One! Oh! Gwen, do you think I should be content with one?” he cried.

“You have no right to call me ‘Gwen,’ and I wish you wouldn’t hold me so tightly,” rejoined that young lady, “I can scarcely breathe. Really there is no occasion to do so. I am not going to break away from you—until the next dance at any rate.”

She was not given to banter, but it was absolutely necessary to check this threatened flood of sentiment, or Tyrconnel would be on his knees before her in the ball-room ere the evening was over.”

“I suppose you prefer Pim’s style,” rejoined Tyrconnel jealously, loosening his hold a little all the same. “He holds his partner at an arm’s length and runs round her—he can’t steer a bit.”

“He tries his best——” said Gwendolen dispassionately.

Meanwhile Pimlico, who had as keen an eye for female beauty as for the points of a horse, had forgotten all about Gwendolen, and was dancing with Violet, who looked very pretty in a maize-colored dress. She had got up a little flirtation with him, and even ventured upon one of those killing looks of hers, half timid, wholly admiring, with a little blush at the end—one of those looks which she had never known to fail.

But it did not seem to penetrate Pimlico’s thick hide. She was good to look at, but she knew nothing about either horses or dogs. She pretended to do so, but he soon found her out. He never met a woman who did, except his cousin Theodora Gargoyle. She wasn’t here—worse luck.

"Well, how have you been getting on with Pim?" asked Coryton of Violet an hour or so later.

They were sitting after supper in a little room under the gallery. There was a rowdy polka going on in the ball-room. Echoes of it penetrated even here. They were quite alone.

"Oh! I don't know," rejoined Violet with a shrug of her shoulders. She had not forgiven Pimlico for his slowness in responding to her advances. "He is an awful bore you know, and can't dance a bit. I have lost half my dress and most of my hairpins, but I kept my temper. I danced with him twice—once more than Gwendolen," she added with a spice of malice.

"Oh! Gwendolen is a sort of correct young person, who would never dance more than once with the same partner unless she were engaged to him."

"Then she must be engaged to Pigeon—for they danced nearly all the supper extras together," rejoined Violet.

"She is, or very near it," said Coryton, who had reasons of his own for making the statement just now. "I am afraid your influence over him has sadly waned since the old Harrow days, Vixie."

"Oh! propinquity is everything with that sort of person," she said flippantly. "The thing one calls love is purely physical with him, and he needs the physical presence of the loved one to feed the flame, otherwise it dies of starvation. Shut me up with him in a country house for a week, and he would be at my feet again."

"Well, his love for the fair Gwendolen is hardly likely to die of starvation, rather from an attack of indigestion, I should think. But Vixie, I didn't bring you here to talk about them—but about ourselves—don't you think it is about time we came to some little understanding with one another? We really ought to go into partnership."

Violet looked at him steadily for a moment or two. Then she broke forth into a little rippling laugh.

"You absurd boy, I shouldn't dream of marrying you, if that's what you mean. One doesn't marry

nowadays to cement a friendship, *mais pour mieux dévaliser*. As to the partnership, I don't say no. You see we could carry that on far better if we were each married to some one else."

"But, Vixie," he protested, "I really couldn't bear to think of you married to some one else. I always pose as caring for no one but myself. But you must know that no one is really without all natural affection. I am awfully fond of you. I'd do anything for you within limits. We'd get on awfully well together. We both have the same views of life, the same ideas of success, the same contempt for humdrum people. Hang it all! What an awful time you would have tied up for life with a fellow like Pin, say, or even a dull, amiable person, like the Pigeon, whom you could twist round your little finger! How you would hate him for every remark he made! How you would curse every scruple of his which interfered with your plans!"

He was close to her, his speaking eyes looking into hers. If his passion was not real, it was at least admirably feigned. She met his gaze with the same amused smile, but a little flush had crept over her face.

"Nonsense," she said, "he would amuse me. I should study his character. It would be such excellent practice, learning not to mind the stupid things he said and discovering the quickest ways to overcome his scruples. He would be a living lay-figure, always at hand for experiments in the art of wheedling fools."

"I don't agree with you," he answered, —"not a bit. I think a fool is an incessant drag on a clever spouse, even though the blood of a Howard and the riches of Golconda are there to temper the folly. You and I together, Vixie, could conquer the world."

"Very well, then," she said, giving him her hand "henceforth we will be partners. You have useful friends, a fair amount of money, I suppose,"—Coryton smiled—"and no affections to impede you. We will go into partnership. But we won't talk of marriage just yet,—at any rate till we see if we can do better elsewhere."

And so they left it—with a sort of half understanding on either side. He saw it was useless to press her further just then, and with quick tact abandoned sentiment for other topics of a personal, but unsentimental nature.

Coryton and Violet sat out most of the dances the rest of the evening—or rather the rest of the morning, for the Cambridge May-week balls go on long after the sun has risen.

They did not find it monotonous, for they had much to talk about. Violet was not a young woman greatly given to dancing with younger sons or callow undergraduates, and she threw over her partners without mercy.

Later on they went down again and made a second excellent supper, and thoroughly enjoyed the bottle of extra good champagne which Coryton induced Hubert Sainsbury, the Hon. Secretary of the Ball Committee, to produce out of the special dozen which he put aside for himself and his particular pals.

It was nearly six o'clock before Mrs. de Courcy Miles could collect her party and take her departure. Coryton saw Violet into the carriage and gave her hand a friendly squeeze at parting.

As the cab drove off he turned and saw Tyrconnel standing in the sunshine pressing furtively to his lips a long white glove. It was Gwendolen's. A gleam of contempt flickered over Coryton's lips. Then he slapped the love-sick swain on the back with a ringing laugh.

"You must be very hungry, my good Pigeon," he cried, "to nibble away at that indigestible morsel. Come back to the supper-room, and have some hot coffee with me instead. It's all right—you needn't hesitate. I've got a pass for the steward's breakfast. . . . Come!"

CHAPTER IX.

A UNION DEBATE.

Genius, when young, is divine.—B. DISRAELI.

THE debate at the Union was largely attended. The motion before the House was one of confidence in the Government—a well-worn subject, which cropped up for debate at least once in every term. But on this occasion a certain element of reality infused itself into the proceedings from the fact that the vote of confidence was to be moved by the son of a prominent member of the Ministry.

In the gallery, which ran round three sides of the spacious, ill-shaped hall, there was a goodly assemblage of women—chiefly from Girton and Newnham, interspersed with a sprinkling of strangers, who had dropped in to kill an hour by looking down upon the bloodless fray.

The brown leather seats on the floor of the House were filled with undergraduates—those on the “Noe” side being perhaps the more crowded; and every seat on the Committee benches was occupied by youths who took notes and conferred at intervals among themselves with a portentous gravity, worthy of the front benches of the House of Commons.

The President’s chair—a hideous gallows-like erection perched on a shabbily-carpeted dais—was on this particular occasion filled by a large heavy-looking individual, who wore a B.A. gown over his irreproachable evening dress.

The debate was opened excellently well by the aforesaid son of the Minister, who wore an eyeglass, cultivated an ultra ministerial manner, and alluded at intervals to “sources of information not generally open to members of the House.”

It was a smart speech and admirably delivered, though certain parts of it smelt overmuch of the lamp. He sat down amid a hubbub of applause.

"The motion is opposed by Mr. Walpole Coryton of Trinity College," announced the President in deep oracular tones, which he fondly fancied resembled those of the Speaker of the House of Commons; "I call upon the honorable Member to address the House."

Then he sat down, settled his collar and resumed the sphinx-like air, proper to one on whom the eyes of Europe are fixed.

Coryton rose to reply. By this time the House was thronged. The opposer of a motion always has the best of it in this respect, for, by the time he is on his legs, the constant dropping in of men on their way from Hall has ceased.

He began with a curious hesitancy of manner, which he always affected at full-dress debates. There was not the least occasion for it, for he knew exactly what he was going to say, but it suggested a diffidence he did not feel, and it made his audience very tolerant—for was it not a subtle compliment to their superiority? He paid the usual compliment to the "able speech of the honorable Opener" and lamented the disadvantages at which he was placed, without those "sources of information" to which the mover of the motion had so frequently alluded,—a touch of sarcasm which his audience was quick to appreciate. Then he gradually warmed to his work, and his words came quick and clear. There was nothing particularly new in what he said, but he had a new way of saying it, and he gave point to his sentences with quiet little barbs of satire, which rankled after they had sped home. His peroration was delightful—the loftiest sentiments delivered in a voice that quivered with an emotion manufactured for the occasion.

The ringing applause which greeted the end of his speech told him that he had scored one more mark, and a long one, towards the goal.

The opener and opposer of the motion having been disposed of, the debate became general. Gaverigan made a short and pointed speech from the high Tory

standpoint, full of winged words, which irritated his own party rather more than they did his opponents. He began by taking Coryton to task for having spoken of the "Liberal Government."

"Sir," he exclaimed, throwing his head back and arranging his hands on his hips, "the tottering ministry, which now afflicteth England, is neither Liberal nor a Government. It is a rotten body standing on two legs of unequal length, whereof the shorter and the more enfeebled has been blighted by the cruel, lying, canting traditions of Whiggery, and whereof the longer, with its pinchbeck trappings from Birmingham, seems in a terrible hurry to slither the whole cursed corpse down to its proper destination, into the jaws of Hell."

A shout of delight came from the Opposition, but Gaverigan turned quickly upon them. "It is not for the weak-kneed Humbugs, who aspire to be the heirs and successors of the old Tory party of pious memory," he said scornfully; "it is not for the organized hypocrisy that I see around me to taunt others with the inconsistency, with the imbecility, with the dishonesty that are their own watchwords and rules of policy. The old Tory Party is dead!" he went on in declamatory tones, "as dead as the great God Pan. But its spirit of chivalry, its spirit of stainless honor still lives—the spirit that charged with Prince Rupert, that flashed from the sword of Sarsfield, that triumphed at Gladsmuir; and some day, in God's good time, that spirit may reanimate this besotted nation, scatter before its face the fools who are called Conservatives and the knaves who manufacture new constitutions in Birmingham, drive out usurping dynasties, and make Right and Might for once coincident and supreme."

Half a dozen youths were on their feet putting points of order to the stolid President, who sat blinking stupidly in the chair.

"I call upon the honorable Member to withdraw the word 'besotted,'" he said after a long pause, feeling he must satisfy somebody.

"By all means," said Gaverigan without rising, and then resumed a conversation he had begun with Mauresk, who had just entered.

Everybody laughed and the President sat down discomfited to blink anew, wondering why everybody laughed.

The next speaker was an overgrown King's man, named Drake, whom we had already met at the "Apostles." He was of course "frightfully clever" and had evidently adopted that theory of his own abilities himself. His speech was thick and hesitating, though bearing trace of elaborate preparation. Every now and then he broke out into a ripple of harsh laughter, preceded by a vacant snigger. For a long time no one could understand the why or wherefore of these grimaces, but, as the listeners got used to the process, they discovered that it was intended as an alarum to herald a joke, due precisely two minutes later. These jokes were so abstruse that hardly any one could grasp their meaning. A few mutual admirers, however, who had been favored with a rehearsal of the jokes at the "Chit-Chat," were seated all round the speaker and supplied the desired applause.

Then followed "a poor Indian, whose untutored mind" impelled him to make havoc of the Queen's English.

At last a man in a Judeian gown, who had been sitting well displayed on the front Opposition bench, sprang up to address the House. He wore white spats over patent-leather shoes, a loud waistcoat, an enormous button-hole and a large amount of jewellery. His hair was redolent of the oil of Macassar, and the gaudy silk pocket-handkerchief which he waved at intervals reeked of "Jockey Club." His arising was the signal for a general exodus. He heeded it not, but went on in strident, loud-throated tones which had earned for him at the Union the nickname of "sounding brass," just as his general style had caused him to be known in other circles as "the Bounder King." His utterance was volcanic, and his style of oratory obviously modelled on that of Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle, M. P. for the pocket borough of Squint.

The youthful orator waved his arms, indulged in vain repetitions as the heathen do, incoherently de-

nounced the "Arch-Anarch of Midlothian" and all his works, opined that before long the "hell-dogs of rapine and civil war would be let loose over the land," finally announced his intention as a Volunteer officer of fighting them to the death—quite after his model's famous Yeomanry speech. In his peroration he spoke vaguely of a Nemesis pursuing the Government in the shape of "letters of blood on a river of fire," and then having run off the end of his notes—pulled up abruptly and sat down. No one took his diatribes seriously except himself. To his ears the ironical cheers which greeted his sudden collapse were sweeter than music, and a smile flitted over his ill-favored countenance as he thought of how delighted his Aunt Mary Ann—Dame President of the Kensington-beyond-Jordan Habitation of the Primrose League—would be when she read the report of her nephew's speech in the *Cambridge Review*.

Coryton came across him a little later in the lobby outside the debating Hall recording his vote with a great flourish in the book kept for that purpose. In accordance with his rule, Coryton went up and congratulated him warmly on his speech—that sort of thing cost so little and brought in so much.

"Thanks," said Plantagenet-Unkels—for such was the individual's name—throwing down his pen with a complacent air, "I flatter myself it wasn't bad either. I let 'em have it pretty hot, didn't I? By the way, are you going now?"

"I think so—the debate is sure to be adjourned."

"Then come back to my rooms, will you? I have got a few fellows dropping in at ten o'clock. Will you come?"

"I shall be delighted," accepted Coryton, and, so saying, followed his companion through the swing-gate, across the roadway to Saint Jude's.

"There are two or three matters I want to have a chat about with you. I think you and I should pull together, old chap," said Unkels with odious familiarity, as they walked along. "There's the Coningsby Club, for instance. I suppose you know we are trying

to get our next President—Rupert Cameron—to come up later.”

“No,” replied Coryton, pricking up his ears. He knew the Coningsby of course, and belonged to it. It was the undergraduate Tory Club. But hitherto it had done nothing but give a dreary dinner to the University Representatives and some other old fossils once in two years—in the days, that is, when the Cambridge University Representatives were old fossils, and not Tory Democrats as now. If there was a chance of Lord Rupert Cameron coming, it would be worth while looking it up.

“It is perfectly true,” said Unkels with an important air. “I am trying to get Sir Cincinnatus to work it for us. Nothing like having a friend at Court, you know, and then the annual election for the Vice-Presidency and Committee are at the end of term. But we will talk of that later on. Come in, old chap, and hang up your gown—here we are.

CHAPTER X.

THE BOUNDER KING.

“Sit crooked, speak straight.”—ARAB PROVERB.

UNKELS’ rooms were in the new buildings of Saint Jude’s across the Bridge of Belshazzar. They were gorgeously furnished in execrable taste—*carte blanche* having been given to the upholsterer in Sidney Street, so far as money was concerned. They were very much too crowded. Photographs were scattered all about, sundry Royalties, actresses, Sir Cincinnatus Spread-eagle, and other eminent politicians were interspersed with photographs of Unkels in every conceivable pose—Unkels as Lieutenant of the University Volunteers, Unkels as Richelieu in the last dramatic performance

of the "Footlights," Unkels in "Spurs" (*i.e.* cap and gown), Unkels surrounded by his pals, and so on.

The mural decorations were broken here and there by Japanese paper fans, tin shields with University and college Arms painted thereon, a Primrose League Warrant emblazoned in purple and gold,—a device of the Bible and the Crown—and a quantity of cheap pottery from an emporium in the Petty Cury.

The Bounder King had made preparations for his guests. On a side table there were biscuits, *pâté-de-foie-gras* sandwiches, cake, oranges, walnuts, and sundry other fruits, cigars, cigarettes, port, sherry, whisky, and coffee—all execrable. In an ice pail close by were half a dozen bottles of still worse champagne.

"There is going to be quite an orgie in a small way," thought Coryton to himself as he surveyed these preparations. "I wonder what I am in for."

Whatever qualifications his host might lack, it was evident—obtrusively evident—that he possessed the very needful one of ready cash. The Bounder King belonged to the monied set of Saint Jude's—and to those who know, this fact in itself will be sufficient to explain what manner of man he was.

The "men of fashion," whom he imitated at a distance, took a delight in snubbing, in pilling, in ignoring him and his ilk whenever they came in their way. But Unkels persevered all the same. He had the hide of a rhinoceros and intense vanity. If he could not be a minnow among Tritons, he would at least be a Triton among minnows.

The guests began to drop in and soon the room was full. Coryton knew some of them by sight. There was the man, for instance, who drove a four-in-hand to Newmarket and, failing to get a desirable companion, had to console himself with the society of a tipster and a tout; there was the man who tried to dine himself into the Pitt Club—and failed; there was the man who rode excellently well, yet who always was pilled for the Polo Club. Then there were several smaller fry, Judeians for the most part, but not exclusively so.

Of these Coryton recognized two as frequent speakers

at the Union. One a short, thick-set youth, with a bullet head, protruding eyes, and a face like an ill-boiled suet pudding in which the blotches did duty for the plums. His name was Oates and he hailed from "Pots." The other reminded one somewhat of Uriah Heep. He possessed a writhing body, damp hands, an unclean collar, and crooked legs. He was generally understood to represent the Church interest at the Union; his name was Bedlam and he came from a place known as "Cats."

They all appreciated the good cheer, there was much popping of corks and chinking of glasses, and much introducing of "Coryton of Trinity" by the host. At first some were inclined to view the new importation with suspicion, but his manner was such an admirable mixture of deference and affability that this frost soon wore off. The Bounder King looked on approvingly, now and then taking one aside and speaking with him in a low voice. So might Guy Fawkes have whispered at a revel of his conspirators.

But this was only a prelude to the real business of the evening. Plantagenet-Unkels had no objection to letting these worthies smoke his Jersey cigars, and drink his gooseberry-and-petroleum. He was rather a hospitable fellow in a way, and liked to see them do it—only he expected something in return. What that was he now proceeded to explain, standing with his back to the fire.

"You fellows," he said, rather thickly, "at least most of you, know for what purpose we are met here to-night; it is to consider the situation—the political situation. The situation is grave."

Coryton looked profoundly impressed and murmured "Hear, hear!"

"The situation is unparalleled in the history of—of—"

"The nation," suggested Oates of "Pots."

"The Union," Unkels went on, loftily ignoring the interruption. "For what is the situation?"

Every one looked expectant, the crushed Oates blinked his little red eyes.

"It is this. There is a fellow putting up for the

Presidency of the Union who is known as a Revolutionist, who would"—here he looked to the photograph of Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle for inspiration,—“hurl down the august—hiccup—Monarch from her Throne, scatter the Lords to the four winds of Heaven and break the Empire in pieces. But that,” he went on, lowering his voice, “is not all; he would—hiccup—pull down our venerable Church, and root out—hiccup—religion from the land, for,—it has come to my ears to-day,—he is an ATHEIST!!”

There was a little stir in the room. Oates of “Pots” snorted and quaffed again at the Hamburg sherry. Bedlam of “Cats” uttered a pious ejaculation of horror.

“You mean the man who opened the debate to-night?” put in a mild man, whose sense of fairness was revolted, “but he goes to chapel sometimes, I have seen him there.”

Coryton smiled, but said nothing.

“All the worse,” thundered the orator inconsequentially. There was a general burst of applause, and the mild man collapsed. “Down with him, I say, down with the traitor!”

There was another hush; somebody cracked a walnut, and Bedlam made a furtive dab at the pâté-de-foie-gras sandwiches. They did not get much pâté-de-foie-gras at “Cats.”

“Excellent; but how do you propose to do it?” said Coryton presently in his most dulcet tones.

“How do I propose to do it!” repeated Unkels, swerving round towards him. “Why, by standing for the Presidency myself, of course. There is no other man. Von Raggedback is no good.”

Von Raggedback was the other official candidate, whose wish it was to stand in the ordinary course of events.

“Why, he’s only half-English for one thing, and then he’s a Papist for another,” continued the orator. “Shall we leave the cause of this great Empire to be defended by an alien and a Papist? No, I say, no!”

“No!” sonorously echoed Oates of “Pots,” who was by way of being an Orangeman.

"Therefore I shall stand as a Protestant and a Briton—I do not go for the Committee or any minor office. I go slap-dash at the Presidency itself. You know my motto: *Aut Caesar aut nullus*."

"And a very admirable motto too," said Coryton, as he flicked off the ash from his cigarette. "You will take steps to prevent its being *nullus*, of course."

The Bounder King winked and looked knowingly round the room. There was a little laugh. Bedlam writhed and Oates snorted.

"We are taking precautions—we have taken them," he replied, producing a roll of papers from his pocket. "These are our little lists. All our plans are laid out, you see. Jude's is with us to a man. Oates has promised the 'Pots' vote, and Bedlam that of 'Cats.'"

"Is that extensive?" queried Coryton blandly.

"It is a dozen solid," put in Bedlam in a curious falsetto voice, which suggested that he was trying to intone and could not quite succeed. "Then there is the vote of all the Colleges east of St. Benet's to say nothing of the others. You see," he said, writhing, "we exchange views at our debating societies; I know exactly how things stand."

Oates squirmed.

"The 'Pots' vote is solid to a man," he said, determined not to be left out of it. "I am President of the College Debating Society and I ought to know."

Unkels looked at Coryton with a satisfied air.

"You see," he said, "we are not riding for a fall. Every college has been worked, except King's, and they always plump for their own men. Quince," he went on, indicating a youth whom Coryton vaguely remembered having seen, when he once attended a meeting of the "Magpie and Stump," "is working part of Trinity. The point is, Coryton, will you undertake the other part and give us your support?"

"My dear fellow," said Coryton with emotion, "with all my heart."

He was beginning to see light through the darkness. Why should he not win over the "bounder" support for his own candidature. That and Pimlico's nomination would make him irresistible. As for Plantagenet-

Unkels, he had no more chance of winning than the Man in the Moon. "But," thought Coryton, "that's his look-out."

Aloud he said, "Anything that it is in my power to do shall be done."

"That's right," exclaimed Unkels, "I thought I knew my man. Then we'll put you on our lists for the Vice-Presidency, and you'll begin to whip up your men. I'll lead and you follow."

"One would be proud to follow such a leader," said Coryton blandly, taking the lists which were given him, with the full intention of putting them on the fire as soon as he got home.

The conversation now became general. Every one was very friendly. There were more drinks, and a little music: "Wrap me up in my tarpaulin jacket," "Sweethearts and wives," and so forth. Bedlam took advantage of the confusion to finish off the remainder of the sandwiches. Oates, when his host was not looking, pocketed some of his Jersey cigars. After a while they began to drop off one by one. Coryton lingered.

"You were speaking about the Coningsby before we came in," he said presently to Unkels, "have you a little plan for that also?"

"Oh, yes, my dear chap," cried Unkels effusively. He was well on in his cups now and inclined to be very communicative and offensively affectionate. "But that is a very simple affair. Funnie-Ffoulkes, you know, is resigning the Vice-Presidency at the end of the term. Well, I don't propose to have a don there again. I propose to elect myself—ha-ha!"

Here he winked and gave Coryton a friendly dig in the ribs.

"That is very simple," said Coryton, "and altogether an admirable arrangement. May one ask how you propose to do it?"

"Oh! easily enough," chuckled the Bounder King; "at the general meeting all the fellows I know will come round and vote for me. I shall give 'em a dinner first. The other members never take the trouble to turn up at a general meeting at all, you know. It's

all a question of canvass. We shall have it all our own way."

"Not if I know it," thought Coryton to himself. "Two can play at that little game. All a question of canvass, is it? I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that phrase."

Aloud he said, "The Coningsby Meeting isn't until the Union Election is over, is it?"

"One week after. We shall get the other out of the way first."

"Excellent," thought Coryton, "I shall win my Union Election through this bounder's support and then I can dish him at the Coningsby."

"Well, I must be turning in now," he said; "I wish you all success; you may depend on me. Good-night."

"Yes," Coryton mused as he walked along Trinity Street, deserted now save by a few belated undergraduates, "I have done a very good thing to-night by going to that bounder's rooms—made my Union election sure and discovered a short cut to becoming Vice-President of the Coningsby. And yet it was ten chances to one that I went to his rooms at all. Surely my luck has delivered mine enemies into my hands. Why did he show his hand so? With Rupert Cameron coming I must make sure of the Coningsby at any cost. But it will require careful working. I must think."

He halted for a moment at the corner of King's Parade, beneath the house from whose windows Frith painted the first scene of his "Road to Ruin." The great block of the University Church loomed up before him, almost glorified out of its square commonplace in the silvery moonlight. As he stood there, Oates and Bedlam passed him with an effusive "Good-night."

"Those worms are to be bought over, if I know anything of human nature," he said to himself, as he looked after them, following the current of his thoughts. "But do I? The beginning of wisdom is the knowledge of oneself—and the end of it for the matter of that. One is never so near being a fool as when one thinks oneself wise, and I have been thinking myself

very wise lately still if things go as I hope—Bah! I will not hope. Hope is a snare. I will act. Blessed is he that hopeth for nothing, for he shall not be disappointed. That is the only beatitude I believe in.”

Then he turned in, and slept the sleep of the just.

The term sped by and Coryton matured his plans. On the surface he did little enough beyond inducing every now and then a batch of his boon companions to join the Coningsby Club. This they did willingly enough, for the subscription was a small one—all the more willingly because in some vague way they understood that by doing so they would help to dish the Bounder King.

The Union Election came and went. It all turned out exactly as Coryton had expected—or rather as he had planned. He romped in for the office he desired and the result of the contest for the Presidency—around which most of the interest centred—was Marshall first, Von Raggedback second, and Unkels nowhere. Unkels cursed both loud and deep and gnashed his teeth in impotent rage. But he consoled himself with the thought that he was at least sure of the Coningsby. Coryton smiled blandly upon him and said nothing. They met at Philippi, and, within two days of the Union election, Coryton became also the Vice-President of the University Coningsby Club, with the visit of Lord Rupert Cameron in prospect.

Now the rest of the acts of the Bounder King and all that he did, how he blustered and swore and protested that he had been tricked and betrayed, and vowed a vengeance that never fell, are they not chronicled in the annals of Bounderdom?

CHAPTER XI.

ELLE ET LUI.

And I'll give my heart to my lady's keeping,
And ever her strength on mine shall lean,
And the stars shall fall and the angels be weeping,
Ere I cease to love her,—my Queen, my Queen !—*Old Song.*

ONE afternoon, after a ride to Linton, Tyrconnel happened to look in at Mrs. Croft's pretty house on the Newnham Backs, and there he came across Mrs. de Courcy Miles and Gwendolen. It was with a half hope of meeting the latter that he had come, albeit he knew that she was not much given to "five o'clocking," that favorite pastime of Cambridge ladies. He did not get much opportunity of talking to her, as she was deeply interested in a new scheme which Mr. Funnie-Ffoulkes was propounding to her with regard to the spiritual necessities of gyps and bedmakers.

"I do assure you, my dear Miss Haviland," the little cleric said, striking an attitude and smiting his knees together after the manner of a mediæval Saint in a stained glass window, "that the condition of these poor people is sadly neglected. The means of grace are all around them, yet their state is one of spiritual starvation. It is to this that I directly attribute the grasping spirit, and the misconception of the laws of *meum and tuum*, which are so rife among them. Now take the case of Mrs. Bumble, who is the bedmaker on my staircase at St. Bridget's—"

"You have told me all about that before," said Gwendolen, nipping the story in the bud. This inconvenient truthfulness was a habit of hers. "It is your scheme of reformation I am interested in—not Mrs. Bumble. How do you propose to work it?"

Funnie-Ffoulkes proceeded to unfold his plans, whilst Tyrconnel hovered around with a moody brow, trying in vain to get in a word with Gwendolen edgewise. But how could he do so when the talk ran on such an uncongenial topic as that of the spiritual destitution of bedmakers and gyps? Seeing how matters stood, the ever-alert Mrs. de Courcy Miles, after a vain endeavor to detach Gwendolen, rose to take her leave. Her niece had perforce to follow suit. As they were going out of the room, Mrs. Miles squeezed Tyrconnel's hand.

"Dear Mr. Tyrconnel," she murmured, "I wonder if you would care to come and dine with us this evening? Quite *en famille*—there will be only just ourselves. If you are not better engaged, we shall be so charmed to see you."

"I could not be better engaged," he said, giving her a grateful glance, "I should like it of all things."

"Very well," she said briskly; "we shall meet later, so I will only say *au revoir*. Dinner at eight, you know."

Then she hurried home to tell the cook to put on an extra entrée, and the Professor to bring forth a bottle of his cherished '47 port from the cellar. None knew better than Mrs. de Courcy Miles the influence a good dinner has in bringing a man to the point.

The dinner passed off very pleasantly. There was a delightful suggestion of home, Tyrconnel thought, about this cosy red-curtained room, with the little round table drawn near the fire, the bright-hued flowers and fruit, the gleaming glass and sparkling silver. The *menu* was a very short one, but each item excellent, and the wine irreproachable. The Professor could not quite understand why his choice Heidsieck and '47 Port should be produced for the benefit of an undergraduate, an ordinary specimen of a class which he was inclined to look upon as specially created for the annoyance of dons and tutors. But with the fear of his sister before his eyes he possessed his soul in peace, and said nothing. Now, and then, it was true, he would make a restive remark, which Mrs. de Courcy Miles was careful to tone down, otherwise she too said

little, only throwing in a word now and then when needed. Her policy was to let the young people do most of the talking.

They certainly did it remarkably well. It was astonishing how excellently they got on together and how much they had to talk about. There were no differences of opinion to-night; they seemed to look on all things in common.

Gwendolen was one of those girls who shine best in their own homes. In general society she was apt to be a little cold and constrained, the atmosphere of artificiality jarred upon her; people said she lacked the *aplomb* of a girl who has done her two or three seasons, and perhaps she did.

But to-night there was no constraint. Unconscious of her aunt's wiles, she rippled on, full of natural, innocent gaiety, and Tyrconnel, feasting his eyes upon her across the table, felt more in love than ever. Mrs. de Courcy Miles and the Professor might have been a couple of puppets, so utterly oblivious did he become of their existence.

Puppet No. 1, however, who noted all things, smiled to herself approvingly. But there was one thing to be guarded against, it would never do to leave her guest alone with Puppet No. 2, or the spell might be broken. The Professor did not shine in the half-hour after dinner, and she knew—none better—the amount of physical exertion involved in bawling into his deaf ear.

So when dessert was over and the time had arrived for the ladies, under normal conditions, to withdraw, she said airily:

"We will have our coffee here to-night, I think, Gwendolen, and all go into the drawing-room together. You see, Mr. Tyrconnel, we are treating you as quite one of ourselves. James likes me so much to sit with him a little while after dinner. He would quite miss it if I didn't."

Poor James, whose ear had caught this last remark, opened his eyes and said nothing, though this was news indeed. Few were the smiles his sister vouchsafed him in their home life. She telegraphed him an

almost imperceptible frown and, sipping her coffee, chatted on coquettishly :

"And you must have your cigarette just the same, mustn't he, Gwendolen ? I wouldn't for worlds deprive a man of the delights of his after-dinner cigarette. The Professor never smokes, but we *love* it."

"If you are sure you won't mind," hesitated Tyrconnel, taking out his case.

"Not at all, provided you give me one too," and she reached out her hand for the silver case. "Ah," she sighed, puffing the blue smoke with careless grace, "how it reminds me of dear, *dear* India !"

But her graces were all lost on Tyrconnel. If she had smoked a short, black clay, he would not have noticed it. His eyes were all for Gwendolen. She looked so fair and sweet and pure with a bunch knot of lilies-of-the-valley in her white dress. She was always beautiful, but never had she seemed to him so yielding, so gracious, so near to him as she did to-night.

Nor had she been. She loved this youth. In spite of all his faults she loved him, and her girl's heart, speaking within her, told her so. She instinctively heard love's divine accent here, and she yielded to its spell. With all her prejudices, with all her cut-and-dried notions of right and wrong, she was but a girl after all—and she loved. Later, perchance, the disillusion might come, the old rigid principles reassert themselves. At present they were dormant, drugged asleep with love's potion. She saw all things through its rosy mist.

Presently, when the Professor was half asleep in his chair and the decanter of port, which oscillated between him and Tyrconnel, had grown beautifully less, Mrs. Miles, having finished her coffee and cigarette, proposed a move to the drawing-room.

"All except you, dear James," she said to the Professor. "You really must finish those notes for tomorrow's lecture. So go to your study, like a good dear man, and I will come and help you presently. Duty before pleasure, you see, Mr. Tyrconnel," she added playfully as the "good dear man" went off

meekly to the room he was pleased to designate his study, instead of snoring over the *Times* in the comfortable arm-chair by the drawing-room fire as was his wont.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles accompanied the young people to the drawing-room and fixed Gwendolen down to the piano to sing Gounod's song "The Worker."

"Such a grand, beautiful song," the good lady gushed to Tyrconnel, "and Gwendolen sings it like an angel. I could listen forever."

Yet before the first verse was over, she murmured something unintelligible about "having to help the dear Professor," and, stealthily extracting *Un Crime d'Amour* from her work-basket, slipped off to enjoy it by the bedroom fire. Mrs. de Courcy Miles knew the value of a little music.

"If everything is not settled by the time I go back I shall cease to believe in myself," she said as she opened her book, kicked off her shoes and put her feet up comfortably on the fender.

Meanwhile the unconscious Gwendolen sang on, her hands moving slowly over the ivory keys, her voice rising and falling. The shaded light of the standard lamp just behind her fell on her head like a glory. She might have served for a study of St. Cecilia.

So Tyrconnel thought as he came closer to her, and sat down on the low ottoman by her side. Mrs. de Courcy Miles's drawing-room was full of cosy corners, but there was none cosier than this little retreat by the piano, framed off by a Japanese screen, and two or three palms.

The song ceased and Gwendolen's hands fell idle on her lap. She swerved round a little and met Tyrconnel's eyes. Before the ardor in them, her own gaze drooped and fell. There was a moment's embarrassment.

Then she said, turning nervously over the leaves of the song,

"It is a grand conception, a noble idea. The toiler's work done—after death, victory; after conflict, rest; after struggle, peace. It is the thought of this alone which can reconcile one's idea of a merciful God with

the suffering and anguish which He permits to come upon His creatures here below."

"Yes," said Tyrconnel vaguely, as he caught the look of spiritualized ardor in the girl's face. Gwendolen in these moods seemed to drift further away from him.

"What you say is very right—you are always right, Gwen, but it is of ourselves I would like to talk just now."

"Of ourselves," she said with a dawning blush—"What of ourselves?"

He came a little nearer, his lips trembling, his eyes bright and eager.

"Gwen," he said brokenly, "I love you—you must know that. No, hear me out," he protested as she was about to speak. "I am not worthy of you, I know—I am weak where you are strong,—but I do wish to live something better than the mere pleasure-seeking, self-indulgent life, with which you seem to credit me—and with you I could do it—only with you, for you are my ideal of all that is sweetest and purest and best. You are my good angel, Gwen. I love you. Can you love me?"

She bent a little towards him as though swayed by the passion of his pleading. The fragrance of the lilies at her breast smote upon his sense. In another moment it seemed she would have been in his arms. But a sudden wave of maiden coyness swept over her and she drew back.

"I—I—do not know," she faltered, "you must give me time."

"Not know?" he cried, reproachfully, "oh! Gwen! I know that I love you. Time! Have I not watched and waited—waited ever since I first saw you, more than two years ago? I cannot wait longer. I cannot live without you. Perhaps you think I am not good enough. It is you alone who can make me better. I am not a religious man, I know; I know nothing of your creed, or your dogma. But I love you, Gwen."

"My creed!" she said softly, looking at him with shining eyes, "my creed is a very simple one, Wilfrid,

only that we should try to leave our little corner of the world somewhat better than we found it."

"Then," he said impulsively, "let us try together. With you I can do all things, without you I can do nothing. Oh! Gwen, do not cast me off—try to love me a little."

"Dear one," she said tremulously, "I do love you—I have loved you all along; it is because I love you so that I wish you to be worthy of yourself—to break from the life you are leading now, to try and live a little less for yourself, a little more for others. Oh, Wilfrid, there is so much to be done—so few who will do it."

He caught her hand in his. "I will, I will," he vowed, "I will begin from to-night. For you I would do all things. Only trust me, only give yourself to me. The thought of your love will guard me against all temptation."

And he meant it at the time, every word—for the spell of her influence was strong upon him.

The light of a great love and joy broke over her face, she bowed her head upon his breast—"Dear one," she whispered, "we will work together for God."

CHAPTER XII.

COTTENHAM.

O youth! thou often tearest thy wings against the thorns of voluptuousness!—VICTOR HUGO.

It was a bright morning in mid-February: one of those mornings when the crisp fresh air makes the blood tingle in the veins like new wine. The sporting portion of undergraduate Cambridge was up betimes and the livery stables were doing a roaring trade. There was a great demand to-day, and every old, raw-boned, hard-mouthed hack was sure to be hired.

For it was the morning of the Cottenham Meeting, and every one who could manage it was on the Chesterton Road, either astride a horse or behind one.

There was "Spot" Flanders, spanking along with his gay little pony; there was jovial Jack Jorkins from "the little house in the park" astride his well-known Bucephalus, and there was von Raggedback, greatly daring, who couldn't drive a bit, trying to drive tandem, a forbidden joy—all the more a joy because it was forbidden. There was all the horse-flesh and all the vehicles which the establishments of Porcheron and Saunders could produce. And last, but not least, there was Pimlico on the box of a festive four-in-hand, handling the ribbons in fine style.

Four or five other men were on the coach, including Gaverigan, who was eliciting the most dismal noises from a horn. In the boot there was a suggestive looking hamper and a case of champagne. On the box-seat was a young and extremely pretty girl, with innocent china-blue eyes, a rosy pouting mouth, and fluffy golden hair blowing all around her baby face. She wore a neat little sealskin jacket and cap, and a bunch of fragrant Neapolitan violets nestled beneath her dainty chin. So fair, so confiding, looked she, one would have thought her a babe in the world's wiles.

But appearances are sometimes deceptive, and they were rarely more so than in the case of Miss Sally Popkins, professionally known as Effie de Vere. Sally had made her first appearance at Cambridge a few terms ago, travelling thither with a theatrical company who played *My Sweetheart* in the queer little theatre down St. Andrew's Street. Sally played the part which Miss Minnie Palmer once made famous. She could not sing a bit, but she danced to perfection and kicked up her little heels and wagged her golden head in such a roguish way that she took the place by storm. Pimlico booked the first row of stalls every night for a week, so that he and his friends might ogle at their will.

Sally became the rage. She was an astute young person, despite her angel face; one of those who keep an eye on the main chance. No one knew better than

Sally that favor is deceitful and beauty vain from the point of view of a permanent investment. So, like the busy bee, Sally improved the shining hour, and made the most of her opportunities. She made many pleasant acquaintances during those trips to Alma Mater. She was now visiting Cambridge for a few days in connection with some theatrical business, and residing for the nonce in rooms down the Chesterton Road, just without the ken of Proctors and Bull-dogs. Pimlico, who was one of the most devoted of her swains, had called for her on his way to Cottenham that morning. So here she was, sparkling and laughing and dimpling and prattling, as they drove through the muddy lanes in the February sunshine to the outlying village where the meeting was to be held.

It was a glorious morning for the time of year and the sun shone brightly. They found the course in capital order and betraying no signs of frost. If it rode a little heavy in places, that was not to be wondered at in those low-lying meadows; but, taking it all round, it was a first-rate winter ground and as good a give-and-take steeple-chase country as one could wish to see.

Pimlico turned into the paddock in fine style and drew up along-side the railing, where a few traps had already taken up a position. Stand arrangements there were none, unless it was the railing aforesaid, along which divers vehicles stood in a row, chiefly tax-carts, gigs, and sundry conveyances of more or less obsolete appearance. This centre served as a betting-ring, where a few Cambridge "bookies" were already gathered together. Hanging on to their skirts was that nondescript crowd which a race-meeting, however small, is sure to attract: Sellers of race-cards, purveyors of drink or food—baked potatoes, monster sandwiches, lobster claws, and oranges—and one very dismal nigger minstrel.

There were few of those hard professional faces one knows so well at recognized race-meetings, but there were a good many ruddy farmers and jovial country squires, who had driven over from the surrounding villages to see the "young-uns" ride, and there was a whole batch of undergraduates trying to

look as sporting as possible, with field-glasses and wondrously built coats. Spofforth had ridden over with his sisters from Fulbourn—buxom hearty girls with a wholesome out-of-door air about them, who sat their horses like Diana and stared at Miss Popkins and certain other damsels of the same feather who were present, as though they were some species of newly-discovered vermin.

Leaving Sally perched upon the box, like a young woman in a circus procession, Pimlico strode off to a neighboring tent. A few of these tents had been erected here and there, one for the Stewards, another for the Clerk of the Scales and so forth. A good many of the amateur jockeys, their bright-hued jackets covered up in Sandown coats, were standing about. At Cottenham no one is supposed to ride but Members of the University and a similar restriction applies to the owners of the horses entered.

The start had been announced for twelve o'clock, but it was 12.15 before the flag fell. Only three could be mustered for the first race, the Magdalene Steeple Chase Plate—namely, Pimlico's Potted Meat, Williams's Little Demon, and Forbes's Poppæa. Potted Meat cut out the work, and was followed at intervals by Little Demon and Poppæa, until two fences from home, when Little Demon deprived Potted Meat of the command. The top-weight suddenly and mysteriously seemed to collapse, and so Little Demon won easily by four lengths; Poppæa second, Potted Meat a bad third. It was a rare haul for the book-makers, for the betting had been 5 to 1 on Potted Meat, 5 to 2 against Poppæa, and 10 to 1 against the winner.

There were curses loud and deep around Pimlico's drag, and sundry ominous mutterings as to "pulling." But as it was known that Pimlico had laid money on his horse, there was very little definitely said. The only one who seemed to have benefited was the astute Coryton who had won largely. Perhaps a little confabulation he had with Pimlico had something to do with it. Anyway that worthy's curses on his ill-luck seemed a little overdone.

"Hi,—help me down!" cried Sally irascibly, from her coign of vantage, "I'm tired of being stuck up here like the fairy queen in a transformation scene."

She was nearer losing her temper than ever she had been in her life: she had lost, or rather she had not won anything—for Sally never paid her debts—on the race. The tip of her nose was getting quite blue with the cold, and the Misses Spofforth had directed towards her sundry scathing glances, which, in her present dejected condition, she felt quite unable to return.

"Get me a glass of curaçoa and a biscuit, do," she said, "I feel quite faint. Well, some people *have* luck," she added, enviously, as she watched Coryton pocketing his shekels. "Who would have thought of Potted Meat going to pieces like that? I shall be quite stony if this goes on."

"Women and horses are notoriously uncertain," rejoined Coryton, and he buttoned up a fat pocket-book with the unmoved air of a professional.

"Well I never!" exclaimed Sally indignantly; and she tossed off her glass of curaçoa. Then, as the softening influence of the liqueur began to make itself felt, she smiled on him again.

"Now, there's a good chap, put a pony on the next winner for me," she said coaxingly, seeing that the hint oblique was of no use. "Pim is going to put on something for me—but he's always wrong, I want a good tip."

"I'll give you one," said Coryton with a short laugh. "Do you see the Pigeon yonder?" he went on indicating the spot where Tyrconnel was standing near Miss Spofforth's horse. "That's the straightest tip I can give you."

"But he always fights so shy of me," rejoined Sally, nibbling the edge of her race-card, "and to-day he has not been near me at all."

"I'll tell you how to bring him round. Come with me," he said confidentially, taking her elbow in his hand and leading her aside. "We'll talk it over together."

A match was coming off just then, in which Coryton had no possible interest. They are always tame work,

these Cottenham matches. Mere processions, for the most part, or put-up jobs with which the book-makers will have nothing to do. Under cover of this particular one, Coryton and Sally had an animated little dialogue, which apparently ended quite satisfactorily.

Gwendolen's influence must be checked at all hazards, and Coryton knew—or thought he knew—that the only way to check a woman's influence over a man is by playing off another woman upon him. He had not studied Tyrconnel's character in vain. There were certain passions which ran strong in him, and, if Sally could only play upon them sufficiently, his good resolves would melt like snow before the sun. So he put matters in train, and trusting her woman's wit to do the rest, hurried off to the next race in which he was keenly interested.

The Cottenham Hurdle Race was one of the big events of the meeting. Some half a dozen were trying conclusions. Among them Coryton's Vixie (rose and primrose), ridden by Williams, was soon installed favorite. Tyrconnel's Cutlet (green and white), ridden by himself, found plenty of backers, and so too did Wilmot's Rosbif (orange and blue). The running was first made by Cutlet, but about half distance Rosbif joined him, and they went on side by side. The lot kept pretty close company until some five furlongs from home, when Vixie, who until now had been laying back, came creeping up—and took second place. From that point it was an exciting race. Cutlet, Vixie and Rosbif seemed almost of a cluster at the last flight of hurdles and only after a very pretty struggle did Vixie—who, strange to say, was seen over "sticks" now for the first time—win by a neck, Rosbif beating Cutlet by a head for the second place.

After this came lunch, every one in the best of spirits, Pimlico beaming, Coryton radiant, Forbes facetious, Sally brimming over with good-humor. Only Tyrconnel, who joined the party when lunch was half over, was a little down on his luck—as well he might be, for he had backed his horse heavily and lost. However, under the genial influence of

Pimlico's champagne, with which Coryton plied him freely, he soon recovered his spirits, or rather he alternated between boisterous outbursts of merriment and sudden fits of gloom.

Sally, who had somehow contrived to be next to him, prattled on in her artless way to a running accompaniment of the clatter of knives and forks and the popping of corks. She did not talk to Tyrconnel very much, but once, when no one was looking, she laid her little hand on his, and whispered how sorry, how *very* sorry she was that Cutlet had lost. Looking down into her upturned eyes, he began to think that she was really a very nice, good-natured little thing—and felt a sort of half pity, half liking, for her steal over him. No doubt the wine had something to do with it.

Coryton, who noted everything, noted this, and smiled.

"Very good, Sally! first-rate! keep it up," he whispered in an aside, when lunch was over, and Tyrconnel, flushed and smoking a very big cigar, was standing a little way off, making entries in his pocket-book.

Sally looked knowingly at him as he hurried off to the tent, for the next race was about to begin. It was the Fulbourn Steeple-chase, which had been instituted by Spofforth some three or four years before.

Tyrconnel was not riding in this, so he went across the meadow to see the water-jump,—the famous Cottenham water-jump, at which nearly every one comes to grief. Though fair horsemen in their way, the riders exhibited some very questionable jockeyship here, floundering over in hopeless style. Wilnot came an awful cropper, but Pimlico's horse cleared it somehow, thundering over in a way that made the earth shake, and managed in the straggling finish to win by a neck.

As Tyrconnel was going back across the paddock, he heard a little cry, and turning, saw Sally leaning against a gate, the corner of her baby mouth drooping, her face drawn with pain.

"What is it? Can I do anything for you?" he asked, with concern.

"I have twisted my ankle, I think," she said; "I

wanted to see the water-jump and was hurrying and my foot caught in one of these," pointing to the rough clumps of coarse grass which were dotted around, "and—oh! it does hurt so, Mr. Tyrconnel!" And she lifted her face appealingly to his.

"Poor little thing!" he said compassionately. "Whatever induced you to go running about these meadows all by yourself? Why didn't you tell me you wanted to see the jump, and I would have given you a lift across."

"I—I didn't like to," said Sally, looking at him with those great blue eyes of hers, "but I would have liked to go with you very much," she added hesitatingly, after a minute's pause. Then she looked down again.

"Well you mustn't be standing here," said Tyrconnel, good-naturedly, not oblivious of the flattery suggested in that hesitating look. "Come, take hold of my arm, and see if we can get back to the coach. We will go very slowly."

Sally put her little hand on his rough coat-sleeve and limped along by his side.

"But I am keeping you—and you want to go away," she said after they had gone a little distance; pressing closer to his side nevertheless. "If it had not been for you I should have been left there all alone."

"Oh! Pim would have come after you," replied Tyrconnel unsympathetically, "and he would have done much better than I."

"Oh no," protested Sally, pouting a little, "not so well—not nearly so well. He is so rough."

Her hand on his arm tightened a little as she said it.

"Well, you seem to get on with him very well, in spite of his roughness," rejoined Tyrconnel bluntly. The wine was in his head somewhat, but he was very loyal and did not like the slighting tone in which Sally spoke of the absent.

She caught her breath a little—a half-sigh, half-sob. "I *have* to get on with him," she said in a low voice and then stood still.

Tyrconnel looked down on her in a puzzled way. The corners of her mouth were twitching tremulously,

her eyes were swimming with unshed tears. It is a dangerous mood, that of beauty in distress!

"What do you mean?" he asked, translating his thoughts into words.

Sally looked around. They were all alone in the wind-swept meadow. The shouting crowd yonder by the betting-ring seemed very far off. Some fine nerve quivered in her lip—she seemed at the point of tears.

"How can I tell you what I mean?" she said, "you would not believe me if I did. You think I have no feelings, I suppose—but I tell you I don't care for Pim a bit—and I do care for somebody else—who never takes any notice of me at all—and I am tired of my life, and wish I had never been born."

She burst into tears and buried her face on Tyrconnel's shoulder.

He felt his pulses quicken a little as she pressed against him. It was only compassion, of course. He hardly grasped the meaning of her words. She was unhappy and tired of her life. Surely here was an instance in which he might do something to help an erring fellow-creature,—some of that good which Gwendolen was always telling him about. But Gwendolen with the soft low voice and sweet pure face seemed very distant just now as the sobbing girl nestled against his shoulder. He could not bear up against a woman's tears.

"Poor little one," he said perplexedly, putting his arm round her in a protecting way, "don't cry, I will help you if I can."

Sally prisoned his hand in hers, and her sobbing ceased.

"You are very good," she said brokenly, "very good to me indeed—not like the others who think I'm made for nothing but to laugh and joke with. It's very hard," she continued brushing away a tear; "people always blame a girl."

There was a ring of sincerity in her voice. She stepped briskly out as she spoke. She seemed quite to have forgotten her lameness.

Her companion did not notice the sudden and miraculous recovery, he was so moved by her words, or

rather by her tears, possibly too by the little hand which nestled so confidently in his own. He pressed it in silent sympathy, trying to think the while what he could say or do to comfort her. She was such a pretty, helpless, little thing. Suffering or sorrow always went straight to Tyrconnel's heart. He was as malleable as clay in the hands of a potter with a pretty woman. It was on this weakness Sally was trading now.

"I wish I could do something," he said again, half to himself—half to her. There was a vague idea in his mind of offering her money—but he had never given money to a woman. His men friends were in the habit of borrowing from him freely—at least they called it borrowing, though they never paid him back—but that was another thing. A sense of shyness held him back; and then he could not offer very much just now, for his losses that morning had been heavy. He did not know Sally or he would have had no such scruples, either about offering the money or as to the smallness of the amount. She was a veritable daughter of the horse-leech so far as money was concerned. But just now her thoughts were running on other things. She changed her tack.

"Will you come to the dinner this evening?" she said coyly looking up at him, "Pim's Cottenham dinner—it is to be in my rooms—and if you come it will make it so pleasant for me. Do come," she added coaxingly.

Tyrconnel hesitated. With the full flood of his good resolutions upon him, he had refused this dinner, meaning thereby to take the first step in the upward path which Gwendolen had pointed out to him. It was to be the beginning of the break with his old life. It had not cost him much of an effort to refuse, for he knew the dinner would be exactly like all the others he was in the habit of attending, and even those delights were apt to pall when one had too much of them.

But he had thought it a great sacrifice none the less, and was rather proud of his resolution in refusing Pimlico's invitation. Gwendolen would approve of

that, he felt sure. She would certainly have approved of his resolution much more if she had known that Sally was to be there. But of that he did not think just now.

"I—I am afraid I can't," he said a little awkwardly. "I have told Pim I can't go—I've got another engagement."

Sally pouted and her lip began to tremble again.

"That is just it," she said with a sound of tears in her voice. "Men are all the same. They will do anything and everything—until you ask them—and then—they will do nothing. . . . And it's such a little thing too. *Do come.*"

The blue eyes were so beseeching. Her face was flushed with her pretty pleading. How could he refuse her? After all, it was such a little thing.

"I will come," he said a little unsteadily, pressing her hand to emphasize his words.

A gleam of triumph glistened in Sally's eyes. They were close to the betting-ring again now and there was hardly time for her to do more than murmur her thanks before Pimlico came up and swept her off to the drag. There was only one more race and then they drove home through the chill gray of the February afternoon.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT HER FEET HE BOWED AND FELL.

Salvation should be very simple, since it is so easy to damn oneself.—ANON.

THE little house in the Chesterton Road was full of light and laughter. It was not a big party, only half a dozen or so, bosom chums of Pimlico—all the usual set was there.

Tyrconnel had come in spite of himself. He wavered a good deal when he got back from Cottenham. Had Gwendolen been in Cambridge she could have

saved him, but she had gone away for a few days with Mrs. de Courcy Miles and he was unable to while away the hour between the lights by strolling up to the house on Newnham Backs. So he put in a chapel instead.

It was a white chapel, for it was the vigil of some saint. The sober-minded, stately prayers, the chanting of the choir, the long lines of white-robed undergraduates thrown out in bold relief against the dark panelled walls, and far away in the richly-carved stall, the grand, silver head of the Master—all these things appealed to Tyrconnel strangely and reminded him in some vague way of Gwendolen. As in all excitable, emotional natures, there was a certain devotional vein running through him.

When he came out of the chapel he had fully made up his mind not to go to Pimlico's dinner after all. But in his rooms he found Coryton ready, dressed and waiting for him,—Coryton, smooth, bland, and persuasive as ever, who seemed to think it the most natural thing in the world that he should go, and pooh-poohed his excuses in an airy manner. Tyrconnel yielded after a brief resistance, and they went off together.

"You see we can slip away early," said Coryton confidentially, as they went along. "I don't feel inclined to make a bout of it to-night."

The other quite agreed.

But before the dinner was half through all thought of slipping away early had vanished from Tyrconnel's head. Sally's smiles and the genial influence born of a good dinner put matters in quite a different light. Everything was very well done, the table was decorated with roses and primroses, the colors of the winning horse, and the light was tempered by rose-hued shades. Everybody was in great form—no one more so than Sally. She wore a pretty pale pink dress, cut in a way which showed off her dainty neck and rounded arms to the best advantage. She had the passion for diamonds common to women of her class, and many little stars and brooches and clasps adorned her bodice and twinkled amid the fluffy

mists of her golden hair. Most of them were paste probably, but they passed muster very well, and served to give an added point to her sparkling beauty, and to enhance the brightness of her eyes. She was full of "quips and cranks and wreathed smiles" and had an answer ready for every one. But her attentions were chiefly reserved for Pimlico and Tyrconnel, between whom she sat.

As the dinner neared its end and Pimlico dipped deeper into his cups, Sally was able to give more attention to her other neighbor. She had already whispered to him how very, *very* good it was of him to come, accompanying her words with a squeeze of the hand under the table-cloth. And Tyrconnel, as he patted the little hand and looked into the candid depths of her childlike eyes, thought himself a fool for having wavered at all.

He lifted his glass and toasted her admiringly: he had done so several times before that evening. (Every one was toasting Sally.) When he put it down again, she stooped forward and touched it with her mouth, just where his lips had pressed the rim.

"I do that for good luck to you," she murmured softly, meeting his eyes. "I go away to-morrow and may not see you again. But I shall never forget you."

"Nor shall I forget you," replied Tyrconnel, whose blood was now slightly warmed by the enlivening wine, repaying her glance with interest. "You must tell me where I can find you."

"Alpha Cottage, Beta Road, St. John's Wood," rejoined Sally promptly, "and you will come to tea with me there one afternoon, won't you?—here," she said, taking the menu card, "I will write it down Now don't forget,—the very next time you are in town."

What Tyrconnel might have replied it is impossible to say, for at that moment their *tête-à-tête* was rudely interrupted by a rain of flowers from the other side of the table. Miss Popkins returned the volley with interest, and for the next few minutes confusion reigned supreme. It was the usual senseless "rag" in which Pimlico and his friends were wont to indulge at their convivial gatherings, and the presence of the lady seemed

rather to egg them on than to restrain them. Sally snatched Tyrconnel's button-hole from his coat. He retaliated by robbing some of the flowers which nestled among the laces at her breast. Forbes was pelting Pimlico with bread, while Williams and Wilmot had found convenient missiles in the *marrons glacés*.

Wilmot sat down at the piano and began to thump out a "razzle-dazzle" polka. The table was pushed aside, a space quickly cleared, and most of the party were soon careering around the room. Sally danced as much as she could, but after a time she subsided breathlessly into a chair, shrieking with laughter at the uncouth antics of Pimlico and the others. Coryton, who never exerted himself, quietly turned Wilmot from the piano and, sitting down, commenced to play. Then Tyrconnel, flushed and excited with wine and overmuch revolving in a small space, came up and begged Sally for a dance. She consented instantly and round they went at a furious rate.

A few minutes later the music closed with a crash and Coryton jumped up from the piano.

"Come, Pim," he cried, taking that individual, who had subsided into a semi-somnolent condition, by the arm, "let's have a lemon squash to steady ourselves, and a game of cards before turning in. Come along, it's nearly half-past eleven already, and it won't do to be late to-night."

Pimlico assented sleepily. So did the others, and gathered themselves around the table—all except Sally and Tyrconnel, who cried off.

"You come and talk to me," she said affectionately, putting her hand on his arm, and leading him into one of those queer tent-like little erections, which Cambridge upholsterers are so fond of rigging up in the corners of undergraduates' rooms. Sally's lodgings were not precisely undergraduates' rooms, but they boasted one of these little cosy corners all the same.

They sat down side by side in the semi-gloom. There was only one low seat, heaped up with billowy cushions, so they shared it together. Sally took a glass of green chartreuse; Tyrconnel took several. . . . They gave alternate puffs at the same cigarette. The

others were so much engrossed with their game that they were practically alone, free to whisper any soft nothings they might please.

But Tyrconnel, at least, had got past the stage of conversation. He was no St. Anthony to remain insensible to the witchery of this woman—only a head-strong youth with a slender stock of good resolutions, which were now melting away like snow before the sun. They were so near to one another, the perfume of her hair was in his nostrils, the fumes of wine in his brain. A sensuous drowsiness stole over him, the scarlet mouth trembled close to his own, the little hands were in his. He bowed his head, and their lips met.

“By Jove! You fellows, it’s half-past twelve,” cried Coryton suddenly throwing down his cards. “This is the third night this week. We must be off—every one of us, or we shall be gated for the rest of the term. Come on, Pim”—and he snatched up his cap and gown—“I’ll race you as far as Magdalene.”

But that worthy, who was now in the quarrelsome stage, began to wrangle about his winnings. There was a general bustle and scrimmage until Coryton impatiently hurried him out into the darkness of the night, closely followed by the others.

* * * * *

“Have you heard the news, Corry?” cried Forbes, bursting into Coryton’s rooms about lunch-time next morning and discovering that youth half-dressed in a cosy chair by the fire, with silver grill dishes, a half empty coffee-cup and all the other evidences of a late breakfast beside him.

“What news?” asked Coryton languidly, throwing a little patchouli-scented note upon the fire as he spoke.

“Why, about the Pigeon. He’s in for it this time and no mistake. We clean forgot all about him last night. He’s been gated before this term. The Dean is furious. He was hauled this morning for being out after twelve o’clock and could give no account of him-

self at all. There's to be a college meeting this afternoon and he'll be sent down for the rest of the term as sure as a gun."

"Poor Pigeon!" said Coryton meditatively, as he watched the smoke curl upwards from his cigarette. "Well, we must pay for our little pleasures sometimes you know. Have you seen him this morning?"

"Yes, I have just come from him. He's awfully down about it, full of repentance and remorse and all that sort of thing."

"One is generally repentant when one is found out, and remorseful when one can't do it again," rejoined Coryton drily. "I am amused to think how shocked the good Gwendolen will be! I would rather face a college meeting than her reproachful gaze. Wait a minute, until I put on my coat, and we will go round and comfort him."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRUMP CARD.

Man hat keinen Erfolg oder einen groszen. Und der grosze Erfolg gleicht oft einem verwirklichten Märchentraum.—F. VON KAPFF-ESSENTER.

LORD RUPERT CAMERON had accepted the presidency of the University Coningsby Club without quite realizing the small part which that institution played in the undergraduate world. His acceptance of that post conferred a momentary importance upon the club and helped to confer a more than momentary importance upon Walpole Coryton, its Vice-President and local chief. The smart sets suddenly discovered its existence and thronged to join it, a rowdy dinner was instituted twice a term in connection with it, and a new batch of officers and committee was drafted in.

The latter event was a masterpiece of intrigue on Coryton's part. There had been the yearly election

already referred to, when Unkels was put to confusion, with the result that Coryton had been elected Vice-President, Funnie-Ffoulkes Treasurer, Bedlam Honorary Secretary, and the Committee included Oates and many others of the same kidney. But halfway through the next term, Coryton summoned a general meeting of the Club and proposed a re-election of officers.

He had secured the assent of the "old gang" by a profusion of promises: Plantagenet Unkels had actually been persuaded to believe that he was to be Vice-President the term after next; Funnie-Ffoulkes was to be Vice-President very soon; Bedlam was to be Vice-President next year and Treasurer as well as Secretary in the mean time; Oates was to be Secretary some time or other and new representatives of "Cats," King's, and "Pots," were to swamp the Committee.

Never had there been such reckless promising, not even at a county council election or before a critical division in the House of Commons. Half a dozen different people had been promised the same office and—such was their vanity and credulity—not one of them had a shadow of doubt about their election. Forbes and Pimlico gave a series of bounder dinner-parties, while Williams and Wilmot put up batches of impossible people for the Pitt Club and were the first to blackball them.

The result surpassed all expectation, and at the general meeting not only was the requisite two-thirds majority forthcoming in favor of a re-election of officers, but even absolute unanimity. Then came the ballot, when the "new gang," by enormous majorities, elected Coryton Vice-President, Forbes Treasurer, Pimlico and Gaverigan joint Honorary Secretaries. The Committee also consisted exclusively of the "new gang."

The "old gang" were effectively dished and were only prevented from resigning in a body—which was precisely desired of them—by a sense of favors to come. They thought to start a club on their own account in Rose Crescent, but the numbers and energy of its founders did not suffice to attract attention in

the University or distinguished visitors from outside. So they returned to their old haunts and made themselves a great nuisance, until Pimlico devised a series of practical jokes, which made the place unbearable for them. So they revenged themselves by coming to the smart dinner, given by the Club at the Lion Hotel, and hooting Pimlico when he got up to propose the toast of "The Ladies."

The next intrigue concerned the entertainment of Lord Rupert Cameron, Lord Southwark and the other guests who had come up to speak at a public dinner in the Guildhall. Plantagenet-Unkels had had the inviting of Lord Rupert and had taken the opportunity of entangling him in an invitation to lunch with him at St. Jude's the day after the dinner. Coryton only heard of this at the eleventh hour, when he received an invitation "to meet Lord Rupert" from Unkels, who had remembered that it would "look funny" if the officers of the club were absent. Coryton pulled a long face when he read the note and decided that prompt action was imperative.

Accordingly, when Lord Rupert arrived at the station, Coryton arranged, by the diffusion of false information, that he and Forbes should be alone there to receive him, and, as Lord Rupert got into the fly that had been chartered for him, Coryton said quietly,

"You were so kind as to hold out hopes that you would come and lunch with me next Sunday."

Lord Rupert, who of course had not a notion who was who, acquiesced at once and Coryton slipped a card into his hand to remind him—not only, as he said, of his address—but also of his name.

At the Guildhall dinner Lord Rupert told Coryton that he had received a note from a Mr. Unkels, recalling a promise to lunch with him, and that he feared he would have to go there, but Coryton replied, with the calmest assurance possible, that he had arranged it all with Unkels and had invited him to meet Lord Rupert at luncheon. It seemed most natural that the Vice-President of the Club should be the entertainer, and it never of course occurred to Lord Rupert not to accept the arrangement.

The dinner was a great success from everybody's point of view : from Lord Rupert's, for he delivered a rattling presidential address, which aroused much controversy in the papers and ended by strengthening his precarious position in the Conservative party; from Lord Southwark's, who replied for the House of Lords; from Coryton's, for many laudatory things were said about him by a small galaxy of statesmen; and even from Unkels's, for Coryton had the assurance to introduce him to Lord Rupert as "one of the most ardent Tories in the University."

Gaverigan, who wound up the toast-list with "The health of the President," was also gratified with some pointed compliments.

"I wish to mention the very great pleasure with which I heard the gentleman who proposed the toast, address a public meeting," said Lord Rupert, when he returned thanks; "he is a nephew of one of my best and oldest friends in the House of Commons (I am sorry to say he belongs to the Liberal party), Mr. Holloway Pother. . . . Mr. Gaverigan has eschewed the avuncular heresies and walks steadfastly and lively in the true political faith."

The luncheon next day was also a great success, except from Mr. Unkels's point of view. That individual had ordered in enough provisions to stock a caravan, and the tables groaned with gooseberry champagne and the sort of food which Unkels associated with luxury. He had sent forth invitations to the highways and hedges of the 'Varsity to compel men to come in "to meet Lord Rupert Cameron."

There they were, hungry and expectant, waiting. A quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, three quarters, yet still he came not. Their servile instincts wrestled with the cravings of the inner man, and it was only when three o'clock struck that they gave up all hope and sat down, sulky and ravenous, to gobble up in silence the good things that had been provided for them.

Meanwhile a very pleasant party was discussing a simple but well-chosen luncheon in Coryton's rooms on the King's Parade. Lord Rupert Cameron and Lord Southwark sat on either side of the host. Mr.

Toadey-Snaile, member of one of the county divisions, was at the other end of the table. Undergraduate Toryism was represented by Forbes, von Raggedback, Gaverigan, Pimlico, Williams and Wilmot, while Austen Marshall came as the show undergraduate on the other side, Drake and MacRonald under the mistaken impression that they would make brilliant conversation.

"I wonder you made such polite references to Sir William Falstaff," said Gaverigan to Lord Rupert, while they were discussing the previous night's speeches.

"Well, yes," he laughed, "Falstaff and I have had some sharp passages-at-arms. I remember once in the House of Commons, when I had irritated him beyond endurance, he leaned forward and called out to me across the floor of the House, 'You little ass,' in a stage whisper that everybody must have heard."

"And what did you do?"

"Oh!" he answered roguishly, "I just shouted out to him 'You are a d—d fool,' twice as loud again. I shall never forget his expression of amazement and indignation when I said it. He got up two or three times to call the Speaker's attention to the expression, but each time his heart misgave him, as he remembered his own share in the controversy. The Speaker remarked afterwards that this was the most summary way of carrying on a debate that it had ever been his lot to witness."

This led to a number of House of Commons anecdotes, which Lord Southwark capped with experiences of the House of Lords. They fell to discussing the mannerisms of Disraeli in both places. Mr. Toadey-Snaile, who was a notorious liar, said he had once seen him so far gone, after he had been rather more than dining, that all he could do was to wave his arms and cry "British Constitution!"

Lord Rupert thereupon gave a story about a bombastic speech made by Disraeli in a mellowed condition being followed by a sneer from Mr. Gladstone about "the sources from which the right hon. gentleman has evidently drawn his inspirations."

"This," he added, "the House would not stand at all, but groaned in disapproval. The fact is, even in its most democratic intervals, there is no body of men so conservative in habits or so tenacious of tradition as the House of Commons. It has its own peculiar code of morals and, while very lenient towards a good old-fashioned vice, like drunkenness, will not stand anything approaching bad taste or bad faith. For instance, if a man is once detected trying to hocus the House with a garbled quotation, he will never be listened to again."

"How do you prepare your speeches, Lord Rupert?" asked Forbes suddenly, apropos of nothing in particular.

Everybody laughed.

"Forbes is a great authority on speechifying," put in Coryton parenthetically, "he once made an oration in the market-place and compared the British Constitution to a sack of wheat."

"That's better than Cincinnatus Spreadeagle's comparison of it to a rocket, at any rate," put in Toadey-Snaile.

"When I first started making speeches, which, by the way, isn't so very long ago," Lord Rupert went on, "I used to write the whole thing out and learn it word for word. Now, if I have time to jot down a few rough notes and think out what line I intend to pursue, I count myself lucky. Very often I have to make a speech straight away without any opportunity for preparation. It is all a matter of practice,—like playing the banjo."

"Talking of old Gladstone," said Toadey-Snaile—nobody had been talking of the man for at least ten minutes, but that did not matter,—“Talking of old Gladstone, what's all this about his planting a tree at Newnham and somebody cutting it down in the night?"

"Nobody knows," returned Coryton; "but the old man's admirers are frantic. They have employed private detectives and threatened prosecutions for burglary. But all in vain. They say it was done by a Primrose dame among the Newnhamites."

"I believe you did it, Cameron," laughed Lord South-

wark, "or, if you didn't, it's a very queer coincidence. Do you remember the Dean's garden at Merton?"

"I should rather think I do."

"What was that?" everybody asked.

"Oh! nothing much," Lord Rupert returned, "it was only my Dean. I was always in hot water with the dons when I was at Oxford, but I had special difficulties with my Dean, until he became quite unbearable. However, I found out that he had a mania for horticulture and treasured the contents of his strange little garden more than the apple of his eye. It had a horribly high wall, but I managed to scramble over one night, though I cut my hand rather badly with some broken bottles at the top. You bet I wasn't long in turning the place into a wilderness. I would have given a fortune to see my Dean's face next morning, when he looked out and found every pane of glass smashed and every growing thing uprooted. But I didn't pull down the Gladstone tree of liberty, 'pon my word."

"I am sure this is quite a new thing," remarked Lord Southwark sententiously, "having political clubs at the Universities. There was nothing like it in my day—at least not to this extent."

"It's a very good thing anyhow," returned Lord Rupert. "I wish I had gone in for politics when I was their age. But I'm afraid I used to think more of huntin' and racin' in those days than of the affairs of the nation."

"Huntin'!" grunted Toadey-Snailé, "there can't be much in the way of huntin' at Oxford. The Old Berkshire,—what?"

"Yes, the Old Berkshire," and Lord Rupert laughed over a reminiscence; "a crusty old beggar we had for master, by Jove!" he went on. "Swore at me like a trooper once before the whole field, because he had run into me, as far as I could make out. However, I said nothing, but just bided my time, that is to say till the hunt dinner at the end of term. I was down to propose the toast of 'Sport' and I felt that the Lord had delivered mine enemy into my hand. 'I have always been fond of sport,' I said benevolently, 'sport

of all kinds. I like huntin' and fishin' and shootin' and I take an interest in racin' and athletics. Moreover, when I can't get the higher forms of sport, I don't disdain humbler amusements, but find a certain enjoyment in ferretin', cock-fightin', or even,—I wound up in my most lugubrious accents, 'if the worst comes to the worst, and there is absolutely nothin' else to be done,—a day with the Old Berkshire hounds!' Everybody said I had scored and the old rascal never forgave me."

"I suppose your clubs here hold very advanced views," Lord Southwark asked Coryton with bored politeness. He had heard all these anecdotes before.

"Very sound views," Lord Rupert replied for him. "They have been supporters of mine ever since I formed the Tenth Party. This is quite a hot-bed of Tory-Democracy, I assure you."

"Well, I'm very glad to hear it. It is a sign of the times and of happy augury for the future," replied Lord Southwark, beaming on Pimlico, who was half asleep.

"The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity," quoted Gaverigan with mock solemnity.

"I suppose so,—provided they are nourished upon Disraeli's novels," returned Lord Southwark in the same tone.

"Was Disraeli a Tory-Democrat?" Marshall asked MacRonald in a stage whisper.

"Undoubtedly," interposed Lord Rupert, "he was the first Tory-Democrat."

"The antithesis, I suppose," said Marshall quietly, "of that other personage, who has been styled the first Whig!"

As soon as lunch was over, they adjourned to the rooms downstairs, where Lord Rupert sat in an arm-chair evolving countless anecdotes and smoking countless cigarettes. He had a long black amber holder, with his initials on it in blue garnets, and as soon as one cigarette was finished, he lighted another, consuming them very rapidly. The rest of the party sat around, watching him open-mouthed and drinking in all his narrations. They were all about himself,

but that was a subject which interested his hearers. Drake and MacRonald, who had been imported as specimens of University wit, scarcely opened their mouths all the afternoon. They sat in a corner, stolidly smoking long cigars. Even Williams and Wilmot were more loquacious.

Lord Southwark went off with Pimlico to talk over his "little bills" and Mr. Toadey-Snaile soon discovered that he wanted to make some calls on sundry musty dons, but Lord Rupert remained on till nearly five, chatting away and taking great pains to be agreeable. When at last he tore himself away and Coryton came down with him to the door, he repeated his assurances of satisfaction and good-will.

"I think you spoke very well indeed last night," he said kindly, as they parted. "You have a great gift of fluency and you arrange your arguments admirably. We must see if we can't get you into the House presently. Come and see me when you are in town."

It was Coryton's last term at Cambridge and he felt that these last triumphs had appropriately wound up the long series of successes, which he owed to his own energies. Lord Southwark as well as Lord Rupert had expressed a desire to see him again, and he meant to take good care that neither should forget it. As he packed up to repair to Lord Baltinglass' place, where Tyrconnel had been languishing ever since his banishment from Cambridge the previous term, he flattered himself that he had already got his foot on a rung of the political ladder and that was more than most young men had done before they went down from Cambridge.

The thought of his father came over him. Poor old chap! He had not much to thank him for, but he had at any rate received from him a legacy of good advice. People are apt to sneer at good advice and say it costs nothing. As well might they say that the hasty masterpiece of the artist or poet costs nothing. Good advice is the potted meat of experience. And Spencer Coryton gave his son good advice when he said, "Remember always that your best friend is yourself."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CITY OF LES DOULEURS.

*Lasciate ogni speranza
Voi ch'entrate*—DANTE, "INFERNO."

Les Douleurs, "the City of Charlemagne" or, as the Pope has termed it, "the City of the Saints"—though to the lay mind it would rather seem the City of the Sinners, and withal miserable sinners—looked very bright one morning in mid-July. It was early morning. There was just that touch of freshness in the air, which dies as the day wears on, and the dew was yet wet on the grass. The band was playing away merrily in the Kiosk, and the shady little Flisen Garden—the spot where visitors most do congregate—was thronged with Cure-guests, who had risen betimes to drink in draughts of health from the healing springs.

It was a motley crowd of half the peoples, nations, and languages under heaven. Russians, Germans, Dutch, French, Americans, English, Belgians, all jostled one against another as they ascended and descended the steep stone steps which led to the Elisen brunnen—all clamoring for their water and taxing to their utmost the energies of the blue-eyed maiden, who was the presiding genius of these sulphurous libations.

If one wished to study types, one could hardly do better than go to the Elisen Garden on this fine morning. There was an English Duchess, who (as she explained to an acquaintance who had turned up unexpectedly) had been sent by her doctor to Aix-les-Bains, but came here by mistake. Why she did not remedy the error by packing up and departing by the next train, it is not easy to see. There was a thick-lipped

Russian Prince who, rumor said, had incurred the displeasure of his Imperial Master, and was, apparently, whiling away his banishment by coming here, to dip and be clean, like Naaman of old in Jordan. There was a besotted English peer, whose name was a by-word at Tattersall's, accompanied by a muscular music-hall *artiste* more famous for her fists than her vocal powers. They were passing themselves off, these two, as "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" and were fondly deluding themselves that the incognito was respected. There was a colonial Archdeacon, who buttonholed every one to explain that he was here for his rheumatism, as though any one cared whether he had rheumatism or not. There was quite a crowd of young Englishmen—in the Service for the most part—from Henrion's and Dremel's Hotels, and there was a prize-fighter and a third-rate Gaiety actress. Altogether it was a remarkable variety-show, and differed from other watering-places in Europe mainly in two respects—the scarcity of its old women and the number of its young men.

Two of these young men, Englishmen obviously, were pacing round the shingly path of the Elisen Garden, keeping unconscious time with the music of the band. One of them, a good-looking youth with a dark clear-cut face, was carefully dressed in a suit of fresh, neat flannels, with the regulation brown-leather boots and cool straw hat. He walked along with an easy step, the embodiment of superb health and careful grooming; he looked as if he had never known a care. His companion had a dejected appearance and a lack-lustre eye; his clothes were loosely huddled on as though he had jumped out of bed in a hurry, and was not quite awake even now. His face was unshaven, and altogether he had a very washed-out appearance. In his hand he carried a glass of tepid water, which he sipped every now and then with an expression of intense disgust.

"This is the third glass of this beastly stuff I have got down," he exclaimed presently. "One more yet—'must have four,' the doctor says. Ugh! I wish he had to drink it himself, and then perhaps he wouldn't be so free with prescribing it to other people."

"Considering you have come all this way for the

purpose, it would be rather a disappointment if he didn't dose you, wouldn't it?" asked Coryton, switching at a lime leaf with his cane.

"It's a beastly hole to come to anyway," growled Tyrconnel. "Let me see, how long have we been here, Corry? Three weeks, I think. It will be my twenty-first bath to-day. It must be jolly slow for you, old chap, with no cure to fill up the time."

"Thanks—very good of you to think of me, I am sure," replied the other with a curious smile, "but I think on the whole I prefer my leisure and am content to leave you the cure."

"Well, it's awfully good of you to have come with me. I don't know what I should have done without you—committed suicide I think in very melancholy madness. You are the best friend I have in the world. No other fellow would have stood by me as you have done and followed me to this infernal hole—"

"I would do anything for you, Tyrconnel, you know that—go through fire and water if need be."

This is a sort of acrobatic performance, which is always being volunteered by people who would hesitate to lend one a ten-pound note; Tyrconnel did not know that. Just now he believed in Coryton more than ever. Had he not stood up for him against his father, had he not thrown up a yachting trip to join him here? True, the yachting trip was somewhat *in nubibus*, and Coryton was quartered for six weeks in one of the best hotels with all expenses paid, and handsome *baksheesh* in his pocket from Lord Baltinglass of Blarney besides, as a small return for all the wise counsel and good advice he had given to his prodigal son.

"That is a very clever young fellow,—a man who'll make a name in the world, you mark my words if he doesn't. Just the sort of friend Wilfrid should have," remarked Lord Baltinglass one evening after dinner to his elderly maiden sister, who presided over his house—or rather houses—for him. Coryton had sat at his feet all the evening, applauding his opinions, laughing at his jokes, treating him with an exquisite deference, which insinuated that it was on

Baltinglass, and Baltinglass alone, that the future of the House of Lords and the consequent safety of the Empire depended.

Lord Baltinglass's sister, Miss Kezia Tyrconnel, *née* Simpson, a lady of evangelical views, with whom Coryton had discussed the future of Protestantism in the Church of England in the interval after tea, entirely agreed.

"Ah! If Wilfrid were only more like him! Young men are so careless about religion nowadays," she sighed, shaking her ringlets. "By the way have you noticed, Baltinglass, how ill Wilfrid is looking? And his cough troubles him a good deal too. I am afraid he is going just like his poor dear mother."

Miss Tyrconnel sighed again. She was given to gloomy forebodings. She called it "going to the bottom of things."

"Dear me," cried Lord Baltinglass in alarm. "You don't say so."

This allusion to his wife's decease frightened him. He remembered how she had pined away amid her uncongenial surroundings, a prey to an insidious disease. Consumptive tendencies were hereditary to the Tyrconnel family.

"What's to be done?" he asked blankly.

"I have already asked the Reverend Fyre Irons to offer supplication for him to the Throne of Grace," replied Miss Tyrconnel piously, "and I need scarcely say that I too supplicate both night and morning."

She folded her hands and cast her eyes upward with the air of one who would say, "What can poor mortal do more?"

Lord Baltinglass gave an impatient snort.

"He must consult Dr. Doublefee without delay," he said.

So Dr. Doublefee was consulted, and the upshot was that that eminent physician advised a course of the waters of *Les Douleurs*. It was Coryton who travelled up to town with his friend and penetrated with him into Doublefee's Holy of Holies. It was Coryton who suggested that Wilfrid should not go alone to a foreign land. It was Coryton who slipped into his waistcoat

pocket, after many protests, the handsome check of a grateful parent.

Such touching devotion almost made Miss Tyrconnel shed tears.

"It quite reminds me of David and Jonathan," she whimpered at parting, "or those two heathen creatures—I quite forget their names—one used to read about them in Miss Medgeworth's *Mythology* revised for family and domestic reading."

"Nisus and Euryalus," suggested Coryton.

Miss Tyrconnel did not hear him. She was tugging something from her pocket.

"Dear Mr. Coryton," she said, "you must accept this little gift from me—oh yes, you really must—in memory of our many solemn talks on holy things."

Coryton took the little package. Could it be Bank notes? It felt soft. There was no time to examine it closely then. But when later on in the train he opened it to find nothing but a morocco bound edition of "*Saved from the Pit, or The Sinner's Refuge*," he threw it out of the window with an oath which would have made the estimable giver's ringlets stand forth like "the quills of the fretful porcupine," could she have heard it.

"I don't know how I shall hold out for the six weeks. I feel awfully bad already," resumed Tyrconnel presently, as he tackled his fourth glass of water. "I can eat nothing."

"Well you must take a turn on omelettes, like the other fellows," said Coryton consolingly. "They cook an omelette better than anything else here, and they ought to do so, considering what a run there is on them. Cheer up, old chap, 'it might be worse,' as a man once remarked who looked into Hades and saw the devil carrying off his friend."

"I don't quite see how it could be worse than that," said the other ruefully.

"Well, his friend might have had to carry the devil," rejoined Coryton drily. "But let us turn round the other way, here's Wigglesworth bearing

down upon us. You don't want to know him, I think you said."

"No, he's such a malicious old brute, he abuses every one."

"Well there is no advantage in not knowing him, so far as that is concerned, for he abuses a stranger just as much as a friend—the only difference is that he draws on his imagination a little more. However, we are safe from him now, he has swooped down upon the Archdeaconess, who is perched as usual on her little seat in the corner. Poor woman! I pity her. Let us go a little nearer the band. I want to hear this Brahm's *Liebes Lieder* Waltz. . . . By Jove! Pigeon," he exclaimed, suddenly catching his friend by the arm, "do you see who is coming along? Sally Popkins! By all that's wonderful—"

Sally it was beyond a doubt wearing an innocent white gown and sailor hat, with a red parasol in her hand, tripping straight towards them smiling as the morn. Tyrconnel flushed hotly and would have turned aside, but before he could do so, Sally was upon them.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, twirling her parasol round like a vast butterfly, "who would have thought of meeting you here? How are you, Mr. Coryton? No need to ask. And you, Mr. Tyrconnel? Pretty fit, I hope. Surely you haven't forgotten me. What, not very well? I am *so* sorry. You do look rather sorry for yourself, I must say."

"The morning light is trying even to the best complexions, Miss Popkins," interposed Coryton. "What brings you here, I wonder?"

"Rheumatism of course," cried Sally with a rippling laugh. "I was sent to Aix-les-Bains and came to this place by mistake—that's the thing to say, I hear. No, the fact was I came over to see a friend of mine, Pussie Prancewell. She used to dance at the Gaiety, you know—I wanted a little holiday and thought I might as well come here. Do you know Pussie? She's great fun."

"I believe I saw her taking the dust on the road beyond Burtscheid yesterday," said Coryton.

"It doesn't seem a bad sort of place," said Sally, twirling her parasol and glancing coyly at the Russian Prince. "I am told it's poor fun to come here, but people seem to enjoy themselves anyway."

"What would you have them do?" queried Coryton with an amused smile. "There is such a thing as 'Happiness in Hell,' some people say. What—going, Tyrconnel? Well, I must be going too. Ta-ta, Miss Popkins, see you later, I hope. . . ."

"Why are you so glum, old chap?" he asked of Tyrconnel presently, as they walked together down the narrow uneven pavement of the Büchel on the way back to Dubigk's Hotel, "aren't you pleased to see Sally?"

"Pleased!" echoed the other indignantly. "How can you ask me? Doesn't it remind me of the most discreditable incident of my life? Corry, I feel that that woman is my evil genius—a sort of Circe, who turns all who come near her into swine. She is to me the embodiment of the lowest part of one's nature. You needn't sneer, I mean it."

"We all mean these admirable sentiments—the first thing in the morning. If we only acted upon them in the evening, what a different world it would be. Don't turn away from me, old chap. I was only joking. You know that. I can't cure myself of the habit. But, joking apart, though, I think you take matters too seriously. We all have our own little peccadilloes. Even St. Augustine was a rake in his youth—that is why he became a saint later, I suppose. But as to poor little Sally, you are too hard on her, 'pon my word. She is just like all the rest of her kind, neither better nor worse—rather better, for she is distinctly amusing, which is something in a world made up for the most part of the bores and the bored. Altogether, I am not sorry she has turned up. She will help us to pass the time here and we can have some fun together. Won't we?"

"No," said Tyrconnel doggedly, "I won't. No more paltering with temptation for me."

Coryton gave him a quick glance. They were under the colonnade of the *Kurhaus* now, just turning into

the hotel. The shadow was so great he could scarcely see his companion's face, which was bent towards the ground. But he saw that the usually mobile lips were close shut. It would not do to press him further.

"My dear fellow," he said in a tone of real feeling, linking his arm in his. "You are perfectly right, it will be best for you to give the siren a wide berth. We will say no more about it. Come and let us have our breakfast out in the garden; the letters must have come by now."

They took their breakfast, a frugal meal after the manner of German breakfasts—just a trout, fragrant coffee, crisp fresh rolls, and golden honey—on the vine-clad balcony which overlooks the quaint old garden of Dubigk's delightful hotel. Conversation languished somewhat, as it is apt to do the first thing in the morning, especially with people who have reached a stage of intimacy, which renders it unnecessary. The head waiter came presently with a bundle of newspapers and letters. Coryton's were soon disposed of; they were bills and duns principally, forwarded from his Jermyn Street lodgings; one a County Court summons inclosed in a registered letter, a new form of torture invented to plague unfortunate debtors. He smiled grimly and tore it into little shreds, making a little orange-hued heap on his plate.

"Well I am out of the way over here at any rate," he thought to himself.

Then he scanned the "Fashionable Intelligence" column in yesterday's morning paper, chiefly so called because it contains intelligence about people who are not fashionable, but who cheerfully pay their guinea a line to be thought so by suburban acquaintance and country cousins. Beyond an announcement that a marriage was arranged between Mr. Plantagenet-Unkels of Kensington-beyond-Jordan and Miss Verity of Bayswater-by-Whiteley, it contained nothing which had even the faintest semblance of interest to him. So he looked idly across at his companion.

Tyrconnel's under-lip was quivering and his eyes were big with suspicious moisture. He was reading over, for the third or fourth time, a letter of several

sheets written in a thin, firm handwriting. Coryton's brow contracted a little, as he recognized the handwriting. It was Gwendolen's.

Tyrconnel looked up, and their eyes met.

"It is a letter from Gwendolen," he faltered. "I couldn't help it, Corry. I felt so wretched and miserable. I was obliged to write to her and she—has answered. What a brute I feel! I have broken her heart."

"Hearts, which break, break in silence," said Coryton with a thin vein of contempt in his voice. "They do not relieve themselves on six closely written pages of foreign note."

"I do not mean that," cried the other indignantly. "Gwen is far too noble-minded to speak of her own sufferings, but one can read between the lines. Not a word of reproach for all I have done—not one word! Do you think she will ever take me back again?"

Coryton took a cigarette from his case before replying. He lit it and looked across at Herr Henrion's pigeons sunning themselves on the red-tiled roof. He seemed lost in thought.

"Do you?" persisted Tyrconnel.

Coryton blew a thin cloud of blue smoke into the summer air. From the other side of the court, he could hear Miss Gussie Gutter, the music-hall singer, croaking out the fragment of a familiar melody, as she made ready for her bath.

"Oh! what a difference in the morning!
What an alteration in the dawning!"

He waited until the verse was finished before replying. Then he said in his blandest accents,

"My dear fellow, how can I possibly answer for a girl like Gwendolen Haviland? She and I approach everything from a different point of view, and besides you haven't shown me her letter yet. In the old days they used to kill the fatted calf for the prodigal; now they rather slam the door in his face. I mean your good religious people, not—*nous autres*. Ah! is that the letter? Thanks."

"Take you back, I should think she would," he continued presently, "it is evident in every line. Even if it were not, Mrs. de Courcy Miles would see to it. But the question is, do you wish to go back? Remember, she never knew the details, and she treated you very hardly, I thought. What was there in your being sent down to make her throw you over as she did? Many good men and true have been sent down before. If she had really cared for you, she wouldn't have done it."

"Oh! but you don't know Gwen," broke in the other eagerly, "how pure she is, how good, how noble. She loves me, but there is One whom she loves more still. You smile, Coryton. I am not over religious, I know, but I do believe—in Gwendolen. She sees things through other eyes than ours. She does not know the details, you say,—she must never know them—never—*never*. But you do not know all. Only two days before that—that Cottenham dinner, she had given herself to me, her pure, sweet love—all she had; and I—I had vowed to lead a better life for her sake. And then, with my vows still ringing in her ears, she heard that—I had been sent down. Could she forgive—how could she believe in me longer? So as you know, she broke it all off—and I—I don't know how I have lived since then, drifting about like a rudderless ship. So I wrote to her at last,—to plead for one more chance, and this is her answer. Tell me, Corry, what does she mean?"

"She means, if I know anything about such things," Coryton replied, tossing back the letter, "that she is at present fighting a battle between her inclination and what she conceives to be her duty."

"And you think——?"

"That her inclination will conquer, of course. It always does. She will take you back, Pigeon, never fear. This is merely fencing before the buttons are off the foils."

"What do you advise me to do?—I cannot go on like this."

"My dear fellow, I advise you to do whatever you think you wish to do. I have a theory that people

only take advice which happens to fit in with their inclinations."

Tyrconnel thought a moment, then a flash illumined his eyes.

"I know what I will do," he said. "I will ask Aunt Kezia to write to Mrs. de Courcy Miles and get her to bring Gwen to Blarney in September, when you and Vixie will be there. When we are together once more, she will relent, I am sure she will—but—" His face suddenly fell. "Do you think she will consent to come?"

"Mrs. de Courcy Miles will see to that," replied Coryton with a moody laugh.

So Gwendolen and Tyrconnel would come together after all! Well, it would be best to recognize the situation and bow to the inevitable. "*Che sarà sarà*," he muttered between his teeth.

"What did you say?" queried Tyrconnel, looking up from the letter he was now reading for a fourth time.

"Merely that it is best to recognize the inevitable in all things.—Ah! there goes Sally Popkins with the Russian Prince, as I live. Why, they didn't know one another half an hour ago. But she knows how to improve the shining hour, does Sally."

"She does indeed," said Tyrconnel with an expression of disgust. "Talk about the inevitable—it seems inevitable for that woman to cross my path—and just now too, of all times. I believe there is destiny in it."

"Destiny," rejoined Coryton, "bah! Destiny does not concern itself with insignificant atoms like you and me. Do not let us lay that flattering unction to our souls. We are creatures of chance, blown hither and thither like straws before the wind."

"Gwendolen would not say so," replied Tyrconnel returning to his letter.

"Gwendolen!" echoed Coryton with an evil smile. Then he sprang from his chair impatiently.

"Nearly ten o'clock. Isn't it about time for you to have your sulphurous bath, Tyrconnel? Now don't be so down in the mouth. This fine weather ought to affect you like a barometer. You ought to be up I

don't know where, instead of persistently remaining below Zero. Come, we'll stroll across to the Rosenbad together. We'll toss those little green frogs we bought in the Fels-gasse yesterday, over into the other people's baths. Won't Gussie Gutter yell? Of course I shall swear that you did it. Come, Joseph must have been waiting an age. In the afternoon we'll walk over to Vals and see Thérèse."

He linked his arm in Tyrconnel's and they walked over to the long low building the other side of the road, yclept the Rosenbad. As they pushed open the doors, an odor anything but rose-like greeted their nostrils, the sulphurous fumes, with which the place was impregnated, forcibly suggesting the pit of Tophet. In the covered hall at the back and in the little triangular garden there were a good many people sitting or standing about, patiently or impatiently waiting their turn. The bath-accommodation at Les Douleurs is absurdly limited, considering the number of visitors who seek its healing springs.

Tyrconnel and his companion, however, had not long to wait. They possessed, or rather one of them did—that golden key, which unlocks all doors. The perspiring Joseph greeted them with an obsequious smile and bowed them down to the white marble baths, reserved for them at the end of a very long, narrow passage.

Coryton's tub was a simple matter. As he was not going in for the cure, it was soon over. So when he had leisurely dressed in the dainty blue and white chamber leading from the steps of his bath, he brought out of his pocket the box of little frogs, which he had smuggled in with him and prepared for action. The baths at the Rosenbad run along in a row adjoining one another. They are each separated by high tiled walls, which form separate little bath-rooms, but all are open to the lofty dome-like roof.

Coryton listened, the spirit of mischief in his eyes. Every bath seemed full along the line and from nearly all came whistling, humming, or snatches of song, with which the bathers are wont to dispel the bad half-hour, during which they sit up to their chins

in the greenish yellow water. He could hear some little way down, Miss Gussie Gutter crooning :

“ Wot cher 'Ria ?
'Ria s on the job.”

and nearer a volatile Frenchman's truculent :

“ *Malbrou' s'en va-t-en guerre,
Miron-ton-ton-ton, mirontaine ;
Qui sait quand reviendra ?* ”

while just beyond Tyrconnel's bath there came a grunting :

“ *Hopp, hopp, hopp
Pferdchen lauf' Galopp,
Über Stock und über Steine
Aber brich mir nicht die Beine !
Immer in Gallopp,
Hopp, hopp, hopp, hopp !* ”

from a fat old German Countess.

“ Hist ! Pigeon,” whispered Coryton tapping the wall, which divided them. “ Now ! ”

The songs suddenly ceased. There came a volley of shrill Billingsgate from the fair Gussie, an exasperated “ *Scrongniew!* ” from the Frenchman, a guttural “ *Donnerwetter !* ” from the German Countess, a violent ringing of bells, a rushing to and fro of attendants, and exclamations of reprimand, disgust and indignation all along the line.

The author of all the trouble strolled out with an impassive countenance and, meeting the angry Frau Lincter (the presiding genius of the Rosenbad), gave a significant nod in the direction of Tyrconnel's bath.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CURE-HOUSE REVEL.

*Vado a balar ze vero
 Cossa ghe ze de mal ?
 Salter a l'età mia
 No l'è pecà mortal
 Se gira e se se sburta
 E se se fa strucar
 Vado a balar ze vero
 No steme a tormentar.*—VENETIAN SONG.

CORYTON paused for a moment uncertainly as the glass-doors of the bath-house swung to behind him. Then he bent his steps in the direction of Mariahilf, and strolled leisurely up to the Lousberg.

It was a beautiful day, bright and clear, the gardens of the villas in Ludwig's Allée were all a-bloom, and the lime-trees swung their fragrant censers low above his head as he walked along. But he hardly noticed it all. His face was dark, and his thoughts were occupied with other tings.

What brought this moody cloud to his brow?

Coryton had hoped to play off Sally upon Tyrconnel, against Gwendolen. What he expected to gain out of it all was hardly clear even to himself. He only knew that with Gwendolen's influence in the ascendant, he would gain nothing. And when Gwendolen broke with Tyrconnel after he had been sent down from Cambridge, it seemed as though he had succeeded. But when he found that Tyrconnel was writing to Gwendolen behind his back, he was shrewd enough to see that the game was up. It was no use opposing him. There was a strong vein of obstinacy in Tyrconnel's character and Coryton, who knew this, felt that the only thing was to play to his likings; and since his

mind was set on Gwendolen, he would marry her. But the marriage must be brought about in such a way that it would seem that it was through Coryton—and Coryton alone—that it came to pass. And after?

"Well," he thought with a cynical smile, "one must wait the progress of events, a disillusion may set in. More love dies from satiety than from starvation. It is impossible to interest, or to be interested in, a person one sees every day."

The future, however, was uncertain. One thing only was certain now, and that was, that Sally was played out—at any rate for the present. Tyrconnel evidently viewed her with aversion as the origin of all his troubles.

Coryton thought of all this as he climbed the steep ascent. The Lousberg is a curving, pyramid-shaped hill which rises abruptly out of the plain. Fifty years ago it was bleak and naked, but now with its shady avenues and winding walks, it forms a sort of Bois de Boulogne to Les Douleurs. Coryton went up as far as the Josephine Monument, and leaning over the railing looked down upon the city stretched out panorama-wise beneath. His gaze wandered over the octagon-shaped dome of Charlemagne's famous Cathedral, past the Marschier gate, and the old ivy-covered fortifications, to where the Eifel mountains loomed a broad line of blue on the distant horizon. He was all alone. The place seemed deserted. It was yet the forenoon and most of the visitors were occupied with their cure. By and by, when the band played in the Belvedere just below where he was standing, it would be crowded, and still more thronged to-morrow evening, for the *Fremden-Blatt* had announced fireworks on the Lousberg, and the Salvator church on the hill opposite was to be illuminated by the white glare of electric light.

A great wave of bitterness swept over Coryton as he stood gazing over the wide champaign; a sense of the injustice of things arose in his heart, as he contrasted his own position with that of Tyrconnel's.

"Here am I," he thought, "with ability and energy enough for ten men"—he was not prone to under-

rate himself—"and every promise of success, were not every promise blasted by the lack of opportunity which money alone brings. While this raw youth with but a fraction of my brains, has only to stretch out his hand and all good things are showered into it. Wealth, fame, power, gratified ambition—all may be his. While—I—I am never to have a fair chance. I am to be content to black his boots—to be grateful for the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table—to end life at the point at which he started."

He beat his hand against the railings in the agony of his hate and scorn.

"Is it a wonder," he continued to himself, "that I am driven into crooked and tortuous paths, to plot and scheme with sharpers and cocottes, when these things are so? What chance have I otherwise?—Oh yes, it is easy to practice all the virtues—when one has a good balance at one's bankers—the poor man cannot afford them. It is better to be born blind, and deaf, and lame than without money. Neither heaven nor earth have any good for those who have it not. Gad! When I think of it all, the game of living seems hardly worth the candle."

We have all our weak moments, even the wisest among us.

He was so engrossed with his thoughts that he did not hear a light step behind him falling softly on the grass. Some one tapped him on the shoulder, and a high-pitched voice cried:

"Well, old Chappie; what are you thinking about so hard?"

Coryton swerved round and faced Sally (for she it was), with all the evil passions his thoughts had called up marked upon his face. Try as he would, he could not obliterate them in a moment. He wanted to be alone just now, and she jarred upon him. Besides, he had no use for her at present.

"I was thinking," he said shortly, after a moment's pause, "of Charlemagne."

"Charlie who?" flippantly rejoined the irrepressible Sally. "Don't know him. Is he a friend of yours?"

Then she sat down on a bench with her back to the

view and swung her heels together. She had no eye for the beauties of nature, it appeared.

"It's lucky we have met, for I have been wanting to have a talk with you," she continued. "Come, now, you needn't give yourself those high-and-mighty airs."

Coryton ignored the latter part of the speech,—in fact he scarcely heard it. He was trying to bring his emotions under control, and well-disciplined though they were, it was a minute or so before he could manage to do so. He looked down, and began to punch little holes in the turf with his stick.

"What is it you want?" he asked at last.

"Oof!" replied Sally laconically, bringing her heels together with a click.

"I hope you may get it," rejoined Coryton indifferently. "You won't get any out of me. You ought to know that by this time. Dog doesn't eat dog, you know."

Then he went on digging at the turf again.

A little flush of annoyance crept over Sally's well-powdered cheeks.

"There's the Pigeon," she said tentatively, "What about him?" Her voice became a trifle shrill.

"The Pigeon's no go," answered Coryton with a short laugh, "he has eaten sour grapes and his teeth are set on edge. No more cakes and ale for the Pigeon. He is going to marry and mend his ways. The game's up, my dear Miss de Vere, so far as he is concerned. You had better seek fresh fields and pastures new. You'll get nothing more out of that particular pasture I warrant you."

"I never did get anything out of it," cried Sally jumping up indignantly from her seat. "Nothing at all. I never saw him after that evening,—you know that; and I nearly had a row with Pimlico into the bargain. . . . So this is the end of all your fine promises, is it? You may be a very clever fellow, Mr. Coryton—so I dare say you are—for yourself—but you won't catch me doing any more of your dirty work in a hurry, I can tell you."

She faced him with flashing eyes, her voice rising almost to the upper C. These moods did not suit

Sally. In them the artificial veneer was apt to wear off, to reveal the coarse grains underneath.

Coryton shrugged his shoulders at the ebullition. His face was inscrutable. He had got the mastery over himself by this time.

"Isn't it rather a pity to waste so much energy?" he said quietly. "If you scream so loud all Aix will hear you."

"I don't care if they do," retorted Sally crescendo: "I have a good mind to go to Tyrconnel and tell him the whole story."

"Do you think he would believe a word you said?" replied Coryton contemptuously. "But come, let us drop these heroics; they don't become you, and they bore me. Granted this little affair has turned out a failure. Whose fault is it? Not mine I assure you. . . . I have put you on many good things before now, and may do so again—if you only keep cool. Gratitude, we both understand, means a keen sense of favors to come; there will be more favors, believe me, if only you are reasonable and do as I tell you."

"That's all very fine," retorted Sally, a little mollified none the less. "A bird in the hand's worth two in the bush. I might believe you if I saw the color of your coin. It would prove you were in earnest," she added coaxingly; "come, put a tenner now."

"You'll never get a brass farthing out of me," rejoined Coryton, brutally. "I'm too wary a bird to buy off my Danes. . . . You don't grasp the allusion. Well, never mind. It only means there's no cash in this quarter. There's the Russian Prince, why not try him?—or old Colonel Oldbags of the Blues? A tenner forsooth! What's the good of a tenner. I can put you up to a dodge by which we'll get not a tenner—but hundreds, not just yet perhaps—but a little later, when the Pigeon has settled down in the odor of sanctity. . . . We cannot all pay for our youthful follies, you know. Come, let us walk down the hill together, and I will tell you how to work the oracle as we go along. . . ."

Sally sulkily consented.

What transpired between them it is impossible to

say, but when Miss Popkins appeared in the *Kurhaus* Garden the evening of the same day, her good humor was apparently restored.

Perhaps it was that little luncheon with the Russian Prince, which had most to do with it. Anyway, she greeted Coryton with a smile in which there was no trace of ill-will: for Tyrconnel was reserved a saddened inclination of the head and a sigh strangled in its birth. It was lost upon him, however, for he was walking with the Archdeaconess.

That good lady, who was something of a permanency at Les Douleurs, and whose little rooms in the Büchel were quite a centre for the English Colony, was busily engaged in pointing out to Tyrconnel the local celebrities of the place. These mustered in great force to-night, for it was the occasion of what the *Kur-Verein* were pleased to denominate a *Grande Réunion*—illuminations and a dance. The dingy garden of the Kurhaus, by day hardly a cheerful place, was on this particular evening transformed into a fairyland; ropes of colored lamps ran from end to end, and many hundred lanterns gleamed among the trees. Groups of people were gathered around the little tables, chatting and laughing as they drank their beer (without which no German festivity would be complete), or were walking up and down, listening to the music of the band.

In the larger ball-room of the Kurhaus—a handsome room richly decorated with stuccoes and paintings,—another band was playing. The windows were wide open to the summer night, and through them at intervals streamed the dancers, pacing up and down the balcony and looking down therefrom at the animated scene below.

The Archdeaconess kept a tight hold on Tyrconnel, as she gave him sage advice as to whom to know and whom to avoid, and she listened sympathetically to his troubles the while—or at least to as much of them as he felt inclined to tell her. She was one of the kindest-hearted of women—with a weakness for young Englishmen. She never forced confidences, but she heard a good many—and very strange ones they must have been, some of them.

"People often tell me more than they think," she would remark sagely over her cup of "English" tea, and no doubt they did, for a prolonged sojourn at Les Douleurs is apt to sharpen one's powers of observation. Besides which mothers confided in her—those who knew her—and bade her give an eye to their youthful prodigals. Miss Tyrconnel, who had heard of her through her pastor, the Rev. Fyre Irons, who had once been chaplain here, had written to her, imploring her to keep watch on Wilfrid. She was just the person to do it. Was she not the widow of an Archdeacon? Did she not keep the keys of the Church?

"I must introduce you to the Chaplain's daughters, Mr. Tyrconnel," she said as they walked round under the trees, "such sweet girls—that was one of them, Barbara, dancing just now with Baron von Stern."

"Rather a funny place for a chaplain to bring his daughters, isn't it?" asked Tyrconnel blankly, gazing round at the motley crowd.

The Archdeaconess laughed.

"Well, since you mention it," she replied confidentially, "it is; I should not have said anything myself, but if they were *my* girls——" She gave her shoulders an expressive shrug. "However, the Chaplain is a very strange man. Did you hear of that dispute he had the other day with Colonel Oldbags?"

"No, all I know of him is that he deals in very bad cigars," rejoined Tyrconnel, who had a vivid recollection of some vile "Trichies" which the reverend gentleman palmed off upon him at a mark a piece.

The Archdeaconess smiled broadly—a meaning smile.

"Dear Mr. Tyrconnel, you don't mean to say he has been trying that on with you already? I ought to have warned you. Why that is a very old game. I know exactly what he said: Just a very few which he brought with him from India,—he would let you have an odd hundred as a very great favor. That was it, wasn't it? Ah! yes I thought so. Brought them from India indeed! Why he buys them down at Schmidt's, in the Fels-gasse, for five marks the gross, and then sells them at £5 a hundred. He ought

to be ashamed of himself—quite a disgrace to the cloth I call it! But there—these ex-army chaplains! How different to the poor dear Archdeacon, or even that shepherd of souls Mr. Fyre Irons. However, Barbara is a sweet girl and dances so nicely. Shall we go up to the ball-room now, and I will introduce you.”

“I shall be very glad to be introduced—but I can’t dance—I don’t feel up to it.”

“Ah! those baths are very fatiguing,” rejoined the Archdeaconess and then she squeezed his arm. “I am *so* sorry for you—dear Mr. Tyrconnel, I have had sons of my own. But there, you have come to the right place to get well, Les Douleurs is perfectly wonderful. You have only had twenty-one I think you said. By the time your cure is over I hope to see you spinning round the room like a top. If you will wait just one moment I will leave my bonnet in the cloak-room, and we will go into the ball-room together.”

The band was playing the sugary-sweet Danube Waltz as they entered the room, and a good many couples were revolving to its strains. There was a great variety of waltzing, the queer German *deux-temps* steps being perhaps the most predominant, but there was also the Liverpool lurch, the Hampstead hop, the Clapham slide, and the Kensington-beyond-Jordan shuffle, for the sort of Englishmen who dance at Les Douleurs generally hail from some of these classic parts. The others are content to look on. There were a good many looking on to-night, standing in groups far out into the room so as to seriously interfere with the comfort of the dancers. The Archdeaconess made her way up to one of these groups.

“Dear Colonel Oldbags,” she exclaimed, effusively bearing down upon a battered young-elderly man who was leaning against the wall. “So pleased to see you again! When did you come? You are staying at Nuellens as usual, I suppose?” Then without waiting for an answer to these questions, “Let me introduce Mr. Tyrconnel. . . . Colonel Oldbags is quite an habitu  of Les Douleurs,” she explained.

"You have been here before?" queried Tyrconnel by way of saying something, for Oldbags regarded him in silence with a melancholy stare.

"Fifteen times," rejoined the Colonel with the air of one who has done something to be proud of—"three times every year for the last five years. It has been my salvation. You remember"—turning to the Archdeaconess—"what a wreck I was when first I came and—look at me now."

Tyrconnel looked at him doubtfully. It was difficult to conceive a more dilapidated specimen of mankind even now. What he must have been in the past, it baffled the wit of man to conceive. The Archdeaconess, however, evidently thought a miracle had been worked.

"Perfectly wonderful!" she exclaimed, throwing up her hands.

"And you? Have you been here often?" asked he of the sorrowful countenance of Tyrconnel.

"This is my first time, and I hope it will be the last. My doctor thinks it will not be necessary for me to return," he rejoined.

The Colonel shook his head with sad foreboding.

"Once," he said, "is no use at all—you might just as well stop at home—I could tell you of many cases. . . ." This he forthwith proceeded to do, with the most approved charnel-house details.

Tyrconnel turned away. This was hardly a cheerful conversation. Why is the path of virtue so hard and the other one so smooth? There was Coryton for instance, over the other side of the room apparently enjoying himself immensely with Sally, Pussie Prancewell, Gussie Gutter, and two or three men. Each of the three ladies carried a huge bouquet; they were chaffing and laughing to their hearts' content. Presently they all went off to the supper room together.

Tyrconnel felt quite sad. He wished the pretty golden-haired Fräulein, with whom he was so fond of sitting under the vine-clad arbor in the garden of the Hotel Dubigk, was here—she and her pretty sister. He had done his best to persuade them, but they would not come. "Les Douleurs' society doesn't do such things," they had told him, with an uncon-

scious parody of Hedda Gabbler. But he really couldn't stand this woeful Colonel any longer. He was worse than old Wigglesworth snarling in yonder corner, or Lady Sometime Tysie and her *Backfisch* daughter on the sofa at the top of the room. So he took the Archdeaconess into the supper-room and they had a bottle of sparkling Moselle together.

There was a very uproarious party at the table next them. Miss Popkins gave a comical sidelong glance towards Tyrconnel as he came into the room, and then seeing that he did not respond, resumed her pleasing pastime of trying to teach a little Spanish Count to speak English. Her method was not that of Ollendorff, since it consisted chiefly of making him repeat after her such brilliant witticisms as "Go, fry your face," and so forth, but his attempt thereat seemed to provoke the party to an altogether disproportionate amount of mirth.

Sally was looking very pretty this evening, all in white, a symbol of her artless innocence. She thought herself very much on the spot and so did the Spanish Count, and he divided his attentions equally between her and the mayonnaise. The rest of the party were all very lively; Miss Pussie Prancewell late of the Gaiety, was repeating to the two young Englishmen from the Grand Monarque Hotel a private and unbowlerized version of "Helen of Troy," a process which seemed to afford them an infinite amount of satisfaction.

Coryton was carrying on a brisk dialogue with Miss Gussie Gutter. That young woman was inclined to be quarrelsome at first, and made many scathing remarks when Sally sat down on her bouquet by mistake, but Coryton's tact had averted the threatened storm, and now under the genial influence of supper she waxed both generous and expansive. Gussie had a good heart with all her faults.

"What have you done with your—er—friend, Lord Welcher?" asked Coryton as he plied her with more champagne. He wasn't paying for it, by the way.

"Mr. Smith, you mean," corrected Gussie. "He went to his downey long ago. He mustn't keep late

hours while the cure's going on, the doctor says, and as I'm over here to look after him I see that the doctor's instructions are carried out. 'What's the good of coming over here if you don't, Johnnie,' I say. 'Right you are,' he says and turns in as meek as a lamb. No nonsense with me, I can tell you—Poor old Johnnie! he's a bad lot, I know, but I should be very sorry for anything to happen to him all the same."

Here Gussie wiped away a furtive tear, but whether born of Johnnie or of the champagne, who shall say?

"I daresay," she continued, with a sudden change of tone, catching sight of the smile which played for an instant about her listener's lips, "that you think I only care for what I get out of him. But I don't. It's rather the other way, I think; I pay my way—look here." She whipped an envelope out of her pocket and drew forth a check. "Do you see what that is?—Forty quid; that is for one week's work, four songs, or rather four times the same song, at four different halls—the Tiv', the Troc', the Pav' and the Oxford. I just hop into a hansom and round I go—one after the other, and the thing's done. £10 a week for each song. So long as I can do that I have no need for anybody to pay my bills," went on Gussie with dignity, folding up the check again. "And the best of it is," she added, dropping her voice confidentially, "I can't sing a bit."

"Oh! don't say so!" put in Coryton affably.

"Not a bit," repeated Gussie, with engaging frankness, "so don't come any of your blarney over me. I often think of the man in the pit who called out to me to 'Go 'ome and git you v'ice sandpapered.' Great Scott! if I was to sandpaper it, there wouldn't be any left. And you know it too—but there—bless you, the public ain't musical—they want to be amused, and I'm so 'sheek.'"

"*Chic* indeed!" murmured Coryton as he filled her glass again.

Miss Gutter quaffed it at a draught.

"Not bad tipple this," she said, "a trifle too sweet for my liking though." Then she gave Coryton a

nudge. "Look at Sally there. How she's carrying on with that little Count. Did you *ever* see such a man. I wonder where he springs from? Shall we ask him?"

"It is wiser not to ask any questions at Les Douleurs," replied Coryton. "He may be a Prince in disguise, you know princes do come here in disguise occasionally."

"I know nothing about princes," said Gussie, "I never knew one—I never got beyond a Duke. Hi—I say, Count where do you hail from?"

The Count knew that he was being addressed, but he didn't understand a word she was saying. So he removed his eyes from Sally and looked over the top of the trifle-dish at his interlocutor with a puzzled air.

"*Pardon?*" he asked tentatively.

"Tell him, Sally," said Miss Gutter, repeating her question. But Sally's knowledge of the German tongue did not run so far. So it had to be deputed to Wigglesworth, one of Miss Prancewell's friends.

"He says that he comes from Spain, where he has an ancient castle and huge estates—vast forests of cork trees, and acres of garlic," explained that worthy after he had translated the question.

"Tell that to the Marines," cried Gussie derisively, "I'm more than seven. Here! *Kellner*—waiter—whatever your name is, bring some more champagne—same as last.—Let us drink to the Count and his Castle in Spain. Tell the Count, Mr. Wiggles, what it's all about."

There was a fresh outburst of merriment round the table. When some people have advanced to a certain stage it takes but little to amuse them. Tyrconnel, sitting apart with respectability and the Archdeaconess, felt very much out of it. Yet surely it was not much to be "out of"—this coarse revelry.

"Waiter," cried Gussie, "if you don't bring that fiz sharp, I'll say something that'll make your ears tingle. That's right, now fill up all of you. No heeltaps! Here's to our next merry meeting."

"I think," she said presently, "it's about time we were moving to the next room. I hear them striking

up again. But I'm tired of slidin' and glidin' to those everlasting waltzes. It's time we had something more lively I say—they may be all right for these beer-swilling Germans, but I want to skip about a little.—Say, Sally—Pussy—shall we do the *pah de troy*, eh?"

But Miss Prancewell pleaded to be excused. She was here for her health, she said. Miss Popkins, however, was game.

"Oh! very well, we'll call it the *pah de doo* then!" continued Gussie, nothing daunted, "Sally and I will be able to manage it. My—won't the furriners stare. Come, Sally, are you ready? What are they playing now, a waltz or a polka?"

"I will go and see," said the astute Coryton, mindful of the bill. If he ate his supper with these sort of people, they must pay for the privilege. He wasn't going to do so.

In the doorway he came across Tyrconnel and the Archdeaconess and attached himself to them at once. Even Gussie would not dare to pursue him here. The sable skirts of the Archdeaconess were a sort of danger-signal to young persons of her type.

"If you knew how I have been wanting to come to you," murmured Coryton as they went back to the ball-room—"but it was so difficult to get away from those dreadful people."

"Dreadful indeed, Mr. Coryton," said the Archdeaconess severely, unfurling her fan. "I meant to have warned *you*. I have heard *all* about them—Goodness gracious!—what *are* they going to do now?"

Well might the Archdeaconess exclaim. Her virtuous eyes had never seen such a sight before. Gussie and Sally having kilted their skirts a little, started forth on their celebrated "*pah de doo*"—a dance chiefly remarkable for a sort of prancing step and a liberal display of ankle and frilling, something of the sort of dance young ladies now endeavor to imitate in London drawing-rooms before a select circle of bored acquaintance. They call it "skirt-dancing" and fondly imagine that it is so. But it isn't, unless it be skirt-dancing plus vulgarity and minus grace.

A waltz was being played when the two ladies first

plunged into the throng, egged on by the plaudits of Miss Prancewell and her companions. Round and round the room they span, each round being wilder than before. If their object was, as Miss Gutter had put it, "to make the furriners stare," they certainly achieved it. Necks were craned forward, lorgnettes elevated, and exclamations of curiosity, wonder, surprise, amusement, admiration and disgust—the last chiefly from the matrons of the Anglo-American colony—were heard on every side. The English Chaplain withdrew his daughters from the scene, the Archdeaconess remonstrated, but the Master of the Ceremonies was at supper, and there was no one to interfere—even if there had been anything to interfere with. After all it was only two young ladies enjoying themselves after their own fashion.

"These English are so eccentric," said the Germans. And then at Les Douleurs one is used to strange sights.

The waltzers, becoming gradually aware that something unusual was going on in their midst, paused one by one, until at last Gussie and Sally were left in possession of the field. Stimulated by the sensation they were creating, possibly also by their libations of sparkling wine, they rose to the occasion and pranced more than ever. Round and round, up and down, they flew, flushed, panting, breathless,—but undaunted. Sally lost her shoe, but went on merrily just the same. Gussie's hairpins came out and her hair tumbled down her back like a Moenad's. At last the music closed with a crash and they collapsed, exhausted, on a friendly settee amid the enthusiastic plaudits of admiring friends.

"Get me something to drink do, Count, if you love me," gasped Sally. "My mouth's like a dust-bin—well that *was* a dance, Gussie."

"Yes," panted that young lady, "we have given them something to talk about at last—you bet. Lend me some hair pins do, Pussie, my hair's all anyhow. Luckily it's my own."

"You should spare us a lock in honor of the occasion," put in Wigglesworth.

"Oh! you want a keepsake do you?" exclaimed Gus-

sie. "Well, we can't part with our hair, can we, Sally? But," stripping a ribbon from her dress as she spoke "we'll give you something else. Who wants one?"

The last impression the Archdeaconess had as she shook the dust off her feet and hurried from the room, was the picture of two Bacchanalian young women reclining on a couch, and giving away shreds of ribbon to the young men—and old men too—who crowded around them.

"Never," she said, as she descended the stairs, "have I seen such a sight in *Les Douleurs* before and never I hope shall I see it again."

CHAPTER XVII.

A COUNTRY HOUSE UP-TO-DATE.

"Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn?"—BACON, King Henry IV. Part I.

BLARNEY is built in a hollow, as all houses are that date back beyond the modern craving for views. Yet the prospect from the windows is by no means an unpleasant one. They look along a kind of valley, flanked by wooded ridges, which are the boast of the whole country-side. The previous owner, from stress of poverty, had made sad gaps in the line of trees, and this gave the ridges a somewhat toothless aspect. But the rich coloring of the foliage, now in mid-autumn with an occasional copper-beech standing out like a dagger-wound in the side of the forest still retained undeniable charms of its own.

Blarney has been associated in men's minds, ever since Elizabethan days, with the name of Tyrconnel. There was a Tyrconnel who was imprisoned for a conspiracy in favor of Mary, Queen of Scots, and lost sundry lands and manors, which were restored to another Tyrconnel, who fought with Drake and

covered himself with wounds and honors in the process. There was a Tyreconnel who fought for King Charles, "bidding the crop-headed parliament swing," and nearly losing Blarney in the process. There was a Tyrconnel at Sedgemoor and Killiecrankie, whose prowess lost him Wilton for a time, until the "little gentleman in black velvet" did his good work and Anne Stuart gave back the stolen lands. There was a Tyrconnel with the Chevalier de Saint George in 1715, another at Fontenoy and another at Gladsmuir, and one of them was created Lord Baltinglass of Blarney by the Exile at Saint Germain's. But they were younger sons, and the head of the family, though he came within the suspicions, was shrewd enough to escape the molestation of the "wee, wee German Lairdies."

Through all the troublous times of civil strife, when loyalty was the most dangerous of disabilities, this family of loyal gentlemen succeeded in maintaining, and not merely maintaining but also increasing the estate, through some erratic whim of Fortune. You may trace the stages of their prosperity in the various additions and adornments which the house underwent three or four times a century. They even survived the South Sea Bubble and the rise of the Nabobs and the Revolution of 1832.

But the triumph of the Commercial System accomplished what neither foreign tyranny nor demolatry nor Billy Pitt's taxation had been able to do. Railroads took away their peace of mind, Free Trade took away their income, and a succession of Reform Acts deprived them of their status in the country. The first steam whistle was the signal for the degeneracy of their race; the penny post and a cheap press relieved them of any wish to be anything but degenerate; laborers became members of parliament and the Tyreconnels ceased to take any interest in anything that might further happen to the country.

An ancient and glorious house, whose traditions of stainless loyalty and honor remained almost their only heritage, succumbed before the Spirit of the Age. Fortune, love of country, desire for perpetuation died away

in the house of Tyrconnel; and all its noble memories centred in the person of one woman, a distant cousin of the last heir of Blarney.

She was insignificant of stature and unprepossessing of appearance, but her nose had the true Tyrconnel arch and she possessed all the true Tyrconnel charm of manner. She seemed to have resuscitated in her character all the ambition of the race of soldiers from which she sprang. But their pride and their prejudices had not descended upon the heiress, and her ambition prompted her to make submission to the Spirit of the Age. She did so by marrying a millionaire soap-boiler, named Simpson, and making him take her name as well as her impoverished estates. So great was her astuteness, that she actually succeeded in obtaining the revival of the old title of Baltinglass of Blarney, before she died of consumption a few years after giving birth to Wilfrid Tyrconnel.

It was a triumph which did her head credit, if not her heart, and Wilfrid, when he thought it over, admitted that Blarney might have passed to less worthy hands.

The first impression of Blarney, as you approach it through the park, is of size. It is a long, low, straggling house of red brick, constantly added to at various epochs in its three century existence, and presents—with its conservatories, its library and billiard-room, each approached by long galleries, its stables, outhouses, and observatory—the appearance of a village rather than a house.

This was what struck a wagonetteful of people now on their way to Blarney as the guests for the first time of Lord Baltinglass. They included Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle, M.P., a professional politician of alien origin, who had lately been rewarded for a course of spread-eagle speeches in the provinces and a golden silence in the House with a knighthood instead of the baronetcy he had asked for; Lady Giddy and her brother, Colonel Lockhart; Mr. Rupert Clifford of the White Rose Society; Miss Mudlark, a Canadian girl, whose acquaintance Miss Tyrconnel had made in

the reading-room of the Grosvenor Hotel; her friend, Miss Connecticut of New York; and Mr. Alfred Seemann, late M.P. for Penge.

The drive had been a rather merry one, Lady Giddy making great fun of Sir Cincinnatus in a quiet way, which led that orator to think he was being flirted with and nearly sent everybody else into convulsions of laughter; the transatlantic young ladies giving their impressions of English society with the approved transatlantic freedom and forced originality; and Colonel Lockhart entertaining all who could be prevailed upon to listen with startling stories of his prowess with rod and gun. He had a trick, while describing his phenomenal shots, of putting up his arms in the attitude of firing, which gave the stories a certain dramatic point, but he showed signs of getting huffy when, after a story that required more gesticulation than usual, Seemann asked him quietly, "Did you ever shoot with the long bow, old man?"

As the house appeared in sight, they fell to discussing their host and the manner of hospitality that awaited them. "I am told it is like staying at an hotel," said Clifford, in his drawling voice. "No one troubles to entertain you, but you can be tolerably comfortable if you bribe and bully the servants sufficiently."

"That's what I like," said Seemann, beaming through his spectacles. "My ideal host is a vulgar beast, who slaps you on the shoulders and tells you his house is 'Liberty All.' Nothing is so disagreeable as having your day mapped out for you by some one who does not understand your habits."

"Well, so long as one doesn't stay here a Sunday, I imagine it's all right," said Lady Giddy. "You know Miss Tyrconnel is a Presbyterian or a Shaker or some such thing, and she turns the house into a sort of quarantine,—to fumigate one's sins of the week, I suppose. Poor Maria Miles spent a Sunday here once upon a time and can tell you blood-curdling tales about it. Cold meals! Three times to church! No amusements of any sort or kind, not even a walk in the garden, and family prayers at night with readings from Evangelical divines,—you know the kind of thing I mean."

I am thankful to say I don't," said Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle, ogling Lady Giddy with a bilious eye.

"What! Not when you stay with Lady Cockadoodledoo?" Lady Giddy asked sarcastically.

"I never do," he replied sulkily.

"I guess I'd hate that, wouldn't you, Kit?" said Miss Connecticut to Miss Mudlark. "We'd have to go upstairs with yellow-backs and cigarettes."

Miss Mudlark put her thumb in her mouth and simpered in a silly way, which she imagined to be suggestive of youth and innocence.

"Miss Simpson would soon rout you out if you did," said Lady Giddy in the abrupt manner she always assumed towards her own sex.

"My dear Gerty," whispered Colonel Lockhart, as they now drove up to the front door, "you really must be careful not to call the old woman Simpson. She changed her name to Tyrconnel when her brother got his peerage and is frightfully touchy about it."

"Oh! But I am a privileged person about names. Why, even Mr. Seemann forgives me when I pronounce his in the English way," she added laughing, as they entered the house, "instead of 'Zay-man,' which he clings to for some unknown reason."

They found Miss Tyrconnel alone in the drawing-room, sitting upright in a hard-backed chair with a large family Bible open upon her knees at the second epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians. As the guests came in, she took off her gold spectacles and wiped them very deliberately; placed a big red book-marker, with "Their worm dieth not" elaborately embroidered upon it, between the pages where she had just left off reading; and laid the volume reverently on a music-stool beside her, so that the words "Holy Bible" might be conspicuously visible to every one.

By this time the whole party had come into the room and was standing grouped around the hostess, waiting until the termination of these devotions allowed her to greet them. This at length she did, in a stiff way intended to convey an impression both of piety and dignity.

"Will you be seated?" she asked condescendingly.

"Oh, not there, I pray you," she added hastily, as Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle was settling his portly person upon the music stool and its precious burden.

"All right, thanks," replied the culprit heartily, "I'll move this book, if you'll allow me," and he proceeded to place it carelessly on the top of a pile of light operatic music, with which Violet Tresillian had been beguiling the morning hours.

Miss Tyrconnel frowned, rose slowly, took up the Bible in an ostentatious manner, the corners of her mouth drooping austere as she did so, and stowed it away in a large ormolu cupboard near the door. Meanwhile Sir Cincinnatus, rather red in the face, was trying to pass off the incident by winking at Lady Giddy, but she, enjoying his embarrassment, looked at him as if he had been guilty of some very grave solecism and the others took their cue from her.

"You have put your foot in it this time," Seemann whispered in his ear. "I shouldn't wonder if she told you to leave the house to-morrow morning."

Now it would not at all have suited Sir Cincinnatus' arrangements to leave the house next morning and his jaw fell at the suggestion. But Miss Tyrconnel showed no trace of resentment and was returning to her seat with all the airs and graces of a martyr about to offer the other cheek to the smiter. She sat down again angularly, like a soldier shouldering arms, and then, folding her hands religiously in her lap, said, "I daresay you would like some tea."

Everybody's face brightened, for it was a quarter past four and it had been necessary to lunch very early. The faces soon fell again, however, as she added, "Our tea-time is five o'clock," as if it were a feast immutable according to the law of the Medes and Persians.

There was a solemn, hungry pause, during which Miss Mudlark vainly tried to put up Miss Connecticut to ask for whiskies and sodas. Then Miss Tyrconnel said to the ladies, "Perhaps you would like to see your rooms," and ushered them out of the door.

"This is cheerful," said Sir Cincinnatus gloomily. "I think I shall go and see if I haven't got a flask and some biscuits in my dressing-bag."

Just then the sound of much laughter fell agreeably on their jaded ears and there burst in from the conservatory Violet Tresillian, Pimlico, Gaverigan, Coryton, Williams and Wilmot, all in the highest spirits after the tedium of a game of golf. The son of the house had gone to the station to meet Mrs. Miles and Gwendolen, who were arriving that afternoon by a later train.

"What are you fellows looking so gloomy about?" asked Gaverigan, after greetings had been exchanged.

"We're ravenously hungry and thirsty and we've just been told we can't have anything for three quarters of an hour," said Sir Cincinnatus dolefully.

"Ha! ha! That's easily remedied," laughed Gaverigan, ringing the bell. "You don't know the ways of the house yet. Miss Tyrconnel's a very worthy woman, but no one takes very much notice of her here. She is hostess only by courtesy title. Give it a name, that's all. George" (this to the footman), "take something to drink into the hall."

"I didn't know you were to be our host, Harold," said Colonel Lockhart, laughing at the coolness of the order.

"Gaverigan's a host in himself," said Seemann, whose spirits were rapidly reviving at the prospect of refreshment.

"Well, really, Mr. Clifford," said Miss Connecticut, who had just slipped back from being shown her room, "I guessed you were just joking when you said it was like staying at an hotel here, but I found my room numbered just like the Metropole, and a notice stuck up over my bed saying that 'All luggage must be ready fifteen minutes before the departure of the train' and another to say 'No reading in bed.' And this looks like it too, calling for drinks all round on your own hook. Do you all do that, or is it just one of Mr. Gaverigan's bluffs?"

"We all do it when we have a mind to," said Coryton in confidential tones, as if imparting a cabinet secret; "for my part, I infinitely prefer it to a hotel. You get better attendance and more comforts, with the additional advantage that you have no reckoning to

pay when you leave. I saw an advertisement the other day of a place at the seaside that called itself 'A Home away from home,' and it struck me that was a good name for this one. You have all the advantage of being away from home as well as that of being able to make yourself entirely at home. I think I shall suggest to Lord Baltinglass that he should advertise the place under that name."

"I quite agree with you," said Gaverigan joining in rather superciliously. "I can't make out why everybody doesn't come and stay here. I hate country-houses as a rule because you are expected either to amuse people or be amused yourself, and I don't know which is the worse."

Further comment was cut short by a migration to the hall, where there was a simultaneous entrance of refreshments by one door and of Lord Baltinglass with Lord Southwark by the other. The host, although of the lowest origin and having no pretensions to breeding, had yet brushed sufficiently with society to pick up something of the off-hand manners, which are supposed to denote smartness but really only connote impertinence. So he only greeted the new arrivals with a toss of the head and a careless shake of the hand and led his companion to a little inner room, furnished in the Turkish fashion, with luxurious divans and glittering embroidered cushions, where the very atmosphere seemed suggestive of Oriental intrigues and privy conspiracy.

"Which is our host?" whispered Miss Connecticut in Miss Mudlark's ear as they passed. "The little sleek man, I guess, with the bone studs and cardboard tie. If I hadn't known he was a real lord, I'd have told him to bring me some ice-water."

"Hush! that's the Marquis of Southwark, a Cabinet Minister, with a pedigree that reaches back to the ancient Britons. You know they used to stain their bodies with woad; that's the reason his blood's so blue. The fat man, with the silky beard and the nose like a yam, is Baltinglass, the Soap-King. But I say, here's drinks at last. Come along and see a man."

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE CONSERVATORY.

Marriage is like a beleaguered fortress : those who are outside wish to enter, while those who are inside want to get out.—ARAB PROVERB.

THE hall was the favorite resort at Blarney. It was a sort of tea-room, smoking-room, cloak-room, boudoir and general lounge all in one, and visitors were agreed that it was far and away the most comfortable room in the house. It was over-furnished, of course ; every room was over-furnished there. But the furniture aimed a little more at comfort than it did in the other rooms, though it was still comfort tempered by display. There were too many coats of mail on the walls, and the best and softest seat near the great open fireplace exposed you to banging your head against a hallebarde if you did not sit down with circumspection. Even then you did not escape from the all-pervading coronets, which, indeed, it was impossible to escape from anywhere at Blarney. There were coronets in bas-relief on the chairs, coronets embroidered on the cushions, coronets in haut-relief on the carved chimney, coronets on the fire-screen, even a coronet in the pattern of the Oriental rugs and coronets among the shadows cast by the fire-logs.

"Our host is, at any rate, determined," said Clifford contemptuously, "that we shall not forget the respect due to his title. I wonder he doesn't wear his coronet at dinner, as English peers are generally supposed to do by the American colonists."

You did not escape from the coronets, but they were less irritating when you had a comfortable chair and

could close your eyes to them than they were, say, in the drawing-room, among the gilt spindle-legged chairs and the ormolu cabinets.

If Blarney was a village, this was the village club. Everybody came here when he was in a gossiping mood or wanted refreshments; letters and newspapers were always exposed here; conspiracies hatched; characters dissected; the opposite sex discussed and travestied; and both sexes married and given in marriage by kind observers in the most grotesque and unsuitable manner imaginable.

While the corks were popping in the hall, the two peers were deep in discussion about the apportionment of certain "safe seats," over which their control was in reality not quite so complete as they imagined.

"I suppose you'll want the Bantam Division of Hodgeshire for that boy of yours, Baltinglass," said Lord Southwark, lighting a cigarette, and leaning the back of his head against the chimney-piece. "Well, I make no objection, but I shall count on your support in West Southwark for some plans of my own. If we are to do anything in either of those places, we must agree to pull together."

"Quite so," returned the other, who had not changed his manner of speech since he boiled soap, "but I'd like to 'ear what your plans are."

"Lord Pimlico is to have the seat eventually, as you are doubtless aware," began Lord Southwark stiffly. "Eventually," he repeated, as the other gave a contemptuous grunt. "I am quite aware that he is not ready to enter Parliament yet. I see nothing to smile at in what I am saying. He does not himself wish it. But in a few years, when he has sown his wild oats, he will do it to please me. The thing is expected, and I shall make a point of it with him."

"And in the meantime?"

"In the meantime, I must find some warming-pan or other. Wigglesworth is positive that since Mr. Loose-Fyshe put pepper into a cream-tart, the Pharisees of Southwark won't support him and, unless he retires (which he refuses to do) it will simply be a walk over for the Conservative nominee. If I had a good private

secretary, whom I could trust, he should have the seat for the next three or four years. But I am in despair about private secretaries. They are all either sharps or flats and I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that one has less trouble in the long run by being one's own private secretary."

"I can recommend you a capital fellow. He's a most high-principled young man and as clever as they make 'em. A son of that old fox, Spencer Coryton, who was Judge-Advocate-General in one of Disraeli's administrations."

"I remember him,—one of those professional ministers who have done so much to degrade political life. A useful varlet, but not to be trusted round the corner."

"Well, you can trust the boy. He's as good as gold. I don't mind admitting to you that I am under some obligations to him and I'd go a good bit out of my way to do him a good turn. If you'd make him your secretary and put him in for West Southwark, you'd not regret it, I'll warrant ye."

"I will think your suggestion over and speak with you again upon it. I saw the youth once at Cambridge and was favorably impressed. I suppose he would not exact a heavy salary, eh? I am not a believer in over-paying people."

"He must have a certain income of his own, but you'll find him well worth all you like to give him. I'm not one that throws good money away, as you may imagine, but whenever I've given him a check for a hundred or so, I've found him fairly earn it."

Meanwhile, the subject of this dialogue was occupied with very different considerations. Coryton and Violet were in the billiard-room, organizing a kind of extempore theatricals which Lady Giddy had proposed and every one carried by acclamation.

"It's a sort of Dumb Crambo, if you know what that means," Violet was explaining to Miss Connecticut, "only it isn't dumb. We invent our dialogues as we go along. First, we choose a word. Then we choose words beginning with each of its letters and act them one after the other. Then we act the word itself, and the audience has to guess it,"

"I always find in these sort of entertainments, the great difficulty is to get an audience," said Mr. Seemann garrulously. "People are ready to take any part you like to offer them, except that one. That's where I come in. I ask nothing better than to be allowed to play audience."

"Yes, you'll do very well," Violet rattled on. "Now are you quite sure you all understand?"

"No, I am afraid it's a little beyond me," put in Miss Mudlark, who felt she had not received sufficient attention during the last ten minutes.

"You tiresome child. I'll take a word as an example. Suppose we say Noah."

"Let me see. He was the man that found Joseph among the bulrushes, wasn't he?"

"See here, Kit, you just be careful," said Miss Connecticut, shaking a warning finger at her friend. "If Miss Tyrconnel heard you, she'd pretty well pull the house down about your ears."

"Do you never play with Noah's Arks in the wilds of Canada?" asked Violet contemptuously. "Now let me see. N, O, A, H. N. might be Nebuchadnezzar eating grass. That's rather an effective scene. We had it at Caradoc Castle last year. O. might be Titus Oates in the pillory; A. Anthony and Cleopatra,—with Miss Haviland as Cleopatra," she added mischievously. "Then H.—Henry the Eighth,—Pim is admirably cut out for that part. Last of all, the word itself, Noah, with animals and rainbows and all that kind of game."

"And here's the very man to play the leading part," exclaimed Lady Giddy, clapping her hands, as Sir Cincinnatus Spread eagle entered the room. "Don't you think he'd make an admirable Noah after dinner with a bottle of port under each arm and two more inside him?"

Further consultations were interrupted by the dressing-bell, and in five minutes everybody had gone upstairs. Violet and Coryton were the last to leave. Just as she was skipping off after the little Yankee, he put his hand on her arm and said with unusual tenderness, "Vixie, please arrange for us to have a

quiet chat before we leave Blarney. I have got no end to say to you and it's so hard to get a moment alone with you in this rabble."

Violet looked up at him quickly with a half grateful expression in her eyes.

"All right," she said, checking the sentimental mood which had begun to steal over her, "we'll get Gwen to sing after dinner, and then slink out and spoon in the conservatory. D'you know, Poley, old boy, I like you better than any of them. I wish you had ten thousand a year. 'Pon my word I do."

"As long as we have enough for our modest wants," he returned half ironically, "why sigh for more?"

"Yes, but our wants ain't modest, that's what plays the deuce with us," she laughed.

"I don't know. A little box of a house in Mayfair, a good cook, a smart brougham and a long-suffering set of tradesmen. We could do that on two or three thousand a year."

Violet's face lighted up. Well, if he had got that, it might really be worth while. They would certainly get on very well together, and Coryton was a man who might easily "arrive" some day, as they say over the water. Meanwhile, she hated having to dress in a hurry and it was getting late. So she waved her hand airily at him and flew up the broad stairs three and four at a time.

When she came down, she was evidently well satisfied with the prowess of her maid and peacocked into the room with all the self-confidence engendered by a perfectly fitting dress perfectly put on. It was made of pale rose-pink crêpe-de-Chine, picked up at a sale at Liberty's. The skirt was very full and fluffy, caught up here and there by bunches of pearls, —not ropes of pearls, like Disraeli's heroines, but little strings of them, at three and eleven-pence the yard. Her baby-bodice, perhaps cut a little too low, was drawn in by a wide stay embroidered with pearls. It was a triumph of art over impecuniosity and, except to a very well initiated observer, conveyed an impression of unstinted dressmakers. No one would have guessed that it was all the work of the little

French dressmaker, whom she had pulled out of a ticklish scrape at Trouville one summer and taken on as her maid and devoted worshipper at twenty pounds a year.

Violet's figure was now well-developed; she had a long wasp-like waist and, as she came smiling into the room, Wilmot, who had met some of the Paris painter-men and consequently liked to air his knowledge of art, whispered in Williams' ear that she reminded him of a Van Beers' girl in a Christmas number. Williams, who had not been to Paris, would have it that she was more like a creation of Sir Frederick Leighton and pointed conclusively to the pink velvet bands that restrained the wealth of golden hair, apparently threatening to burst out as from a horn of plenty.

Violet's hair was the best among her "points," as Pim and his cousin Theodora Gargoyle said when they discussed her, and Julie, her maid, certainly knew how to make the most of it, as she did of everything about her mistress.

When Violet came into the drawing-room, she found an unusual commotion going on. It was all owing to Miss Tyrconnel, who, by way of marking her resentment at the number of strange guests invited to the house, had announced that she hadn't the ghost of an idea how she was to send them all in to dinner. Lady Giddy precipitated herself upon the opportunity: let Miss Tyrconnel leave everything to her and it should all be done most admirably. Miss Tyrconnel did not quite like the idea, but, like most self-made people, she had a lurking sense of respect for her social superiors, and besides, after her incautious avowal, it was not easy to back out of the offer. So Lady Giddy announced to all and sundry that, instead of going in to dinner in the usual orthodox way, they were to go in by lot. It was quite the latest *chic*, she assured Lord Baltinglass, who seemed rather doubtful about it. The Broadakers always did it when they had a big house party and Prince Pumpenheim had thought it very funny during his last visit to England.

This had silenced the host's last scruple and here were two hats on the table full of little folded bits of paper. One contained the names of various historical or mythological male characters and the other those of the corresponding female ones. All the men had to draw from one hat and all the ladies from the other; then they found themselves more or less grotesquely paired off.

Screams of laughter greeted the announcement of each fresh draw, culminating in unending merriment when Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle was drawn as Romeo to Miss Tyrconnel's Juliet. Lord Baltinglass smiled grimly when he found himself allotted the character of Adam to Mrs. de Courcy Miles' Eve, asking—to Miss Tyrconnel's grave concern,—whether the part was to be played in costume. Every one agreed that Mr. Rupert Clifford and Lady Elizabeth Gargoyl, a stout lady with Titian-like hair, were hardly used in being sent in as Jumbo and Alice, for their worst enemies could not accuse them of excessive *embonpoint*; but Coryton and Violet as Faust and Marguerite met with general approval, as did Wilfrid Tyrconnel and Gwendolen Haviland in the rôle of Darby and Joan. Miss Mauresk and Colonel Lockhart were Venus and Adonis, the latter a somewhat juvenile part for the superannuated beau. Sir Edward Tresillian thought the game rather funny until he drew Punch to Miss Connecticut's Judy. Mr. Seemann was no less ridiculous, though he thought himself more fortunate, as Anthony with Miss Mudlark for an incongruous Cleopatra. Pimlico and Miss Theodora Gargoyl were the Bulbul and the Rose; Cupid and Psyche were represented: Cupid by a little shrivelled up old man in a fez, who turned out to be the Turkish ambassador, and Psyche by the "Archdeaconess," who had been asked by Miss Tyrconnel as a return for her kindness to Wilfrid at Les Douleurs; Gaverigan and Lady Giddy were Fox and Goose; Lord Southwark and Lady Vieille were the Mouse and the Lion, or Lion-hunter, as Lady Giddy said it ought to be. Owing to a dearth of ladies there were two extra men's tickets, which ap-

propriately enough, sent in Williams and Wilmot as David and Jonathan.

When the various characters at last made their way into the dining-room, they found cards on the plates with their new names; Jumbo and Joan were next each other, while the Fox was in dangerous proximity to the Bulbul. Adam and Eve were subjected to great chaff when apple-tart came round. Altogether the pastime afforded an agreeable diversion, but Miss Tyrconnel registered a mental vow that she would never tolerate such foolery again, and when, later on, Lady Giddy proposed a game of hide-and-seek in the garden by moonlight, she entered an abrupt and disconcerting negative.

Coryton and Violet were, however, able to arrange a small variation of that game for themselves after dinner on a cosy settee behind a big palm in the conservatory.

"Well, Poley, my charming Faust-up-to-date, what have you to tell your Marguerite?" she asked playfully, when they were settled.

"Something she knows very well already," he replied taking up her chubby little hand in his and looking intently at it, half sentimentally, half wonderingly.

"Yes, but is it prudent?" she said thoughtfully, looking out into the moonbeams, which danced in the splashing fountain just outside. "We are very good friends and should probably remain so. That is the best safeguard for a happy marriage. It can give melodramatic love a stone and a beating, as Theodora would say. But couldn't we both do a great deal better for ourselves elsewhere? Wouldn't it be criminally idiotic not to marry for tin?"

"No. That is the mistake made by what are called 'fly jugginses.' The world is not divided into two broad divisions, sharpers and jays. There are all sorts of gradations between them. Perhaps the commonest is the juggins by nature, who has been sufficiently emancipated to fancy himself 'fly.' The 'fly juggins' is a far commoner type than people suppose. The three-card-trick is directed solely against him. He is shown the corner turned down and fancies he is going

to cheat the three-card-trick man, with the result that he only gets cheated himself. Astuteness is all very well, but it is not elastic beyond a certain point and may be overdone."

"Yes, I remember hearing about your brush with sharpers on the way to Newmarket, but I don't think you came second best out of that encounter. However, come back to your muttons, meaning me."

"I was only going to say, that people who marry for money only, are 'fly jugginses,' who overreach themselves. After all we should be comfortably off, as I was saying before dinner, and I don't see what more we should need. You've got money, or will have, and I have a certain amount. We shan't starve or be restricted to three-course dinners or driven to live in a flat at Putney!"

"No, I am sure we should have a very good time as long as things went smoothly. But what do you propose? Not that we should place ourselves in the ridiculous position of telling the world we are engaged?"

"Would that be so very ridiculous?" asked Coryton rather hurt.

"I don't suppose *we* should be ridiculous. But most people are when they're engaged. I almost think I should feel shy, though I never have yet. If we are to be engaged, let's only announce it about a day before the wedding."

"Then we'd get no presents."

"Well, a week."

"All right. But between ourselves it's an engagement all the same, isn't it, Vixie? Just give me one little kiss to seal the bargain."

Violet gave a slight blush, an unheard-of thing for her. She had kissed many young men before now among her acquaintances, but somehow this seemed different. However, after a slight show of hesitation, she put up her cherry lips, with her eyes sparkling in quite an unnatural way, and there was a sort of tremble in her eyelashes as she looked up at him.

Just at this psychological moment, however, the spell was rudely broken by the appearance of Mrs. de

Courey Miles, who had heard many inquiries for Violet to play the game they arranged before dinner, and had good-naturedly volunteered to find her. Violet, for once taken off her guard, answered her rudely, with some display of impatience.

"Can't you see that I'm busy?" she remonstrated. "Why can't you mind your own concerns and leave me alone, instead of bursting in like a hurricane just when I was cosy and amused? You quite startled me."

"So I perceive," said Mrs. Miles drily, as she turned upon her heel.

When she was gone, the spirit of their dream was altered and neither proposed to recommence the interrupted kiss. They said nothing for a while, but sat staring moodily at the tips of their toes. At last Violet said in a constrained way, "Let's go to the drawing-room," and they stepped blinking into the over-lighted house.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MELTING OF THE ICE-MAIDEN.

Hide, O, hide those hills of snow,
Which thy frozen bosom bears,
On whose tops the pinks that grow
Are of those that April wears !
But first set my poor heart free,
Bound in those icy chains by thee.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

Virtue, like an iceberg, chills most when it thaws.—PICHEGRU.

GWENDOLEN now met Wilfrid for the first time since his abrupt departure from Cambridge seven months before. She had made a great show of reluctance about accepting Lord Baltinglass's invitation to Blarney, much to Mrs. de Courcy Miles's amazement and disgust. But in her heart of hearts the girl knew that she would yield. She had not known how dear Tyrconnel

was to her until they were parted, apparently forever.

She had the bump of veneration very strongly developed, and numbered respect for the powers that be, such as college authorities, among the highest duties. Like all those who have not yet tasted the fruit of the tree of good and evil, she was utterly intolerant of the smallest wandering from the path of duty and would admit no distinction between the most heinous moral offences and the most trivial peccadilloes. One of her favorite phrases was, that that there are no such things as little sins.

There was also a certain amount of injured pride in her resentment against Wilfrid Tyrconnel. She had not exactly mapped out for herself the rôle of the beautiful saint marrying and reclaiming the dissolute rake, but her schemes were leavened by some such idea. He was weak, but well meaning; she was a Christian woman. Was he not to be snatched as a brand from the burning and by her intervention? Was she not to be the humble instrument of rescuing him for the church of Christ and guarding his goings so that his footsteps slipped not? She had been so happy in that thought, so proud of her first success as an evangelist, and at the very first trial all her hopes, all her calculations, all her triumphs had come to an abrupt end like a child's house of cards.

In her moments of austerest self-communing, she attributed the failure to her pride and thanked Heaven for the timely lesson. But even then she was still woman enough to feel that the fault of her failure was Tyrconnel's and to cherish a grievance against him for her disappointment. He had been in such a hurry to forsake the narrow path, almost before the vows were silent upon his lips. How little in earnest he must have been, how idle must have been his promises of amendment, his dedication of himself to the service of God! And if so, how idle too perhaps his passionate protestations of love for her. She had said she would trust him and he had been so hasty to prove to her that he was utterly untrustworthy. All this and more she had written in her precise style to him while he

was at Les Douleurs. Pages and pages of remonstrance and reflection and lamentation on that horrid "foreign" writing-paper, where all the ink shows through.

"Good Heavens!" Tyrconnel had thought to himself, in the intervals between his moods of infatuation and penitence, "if she makes such an outcry over my being sent down from Cambridge for keeping late hours, what would she not say if she knew of my short-lived intrigue with Sally Popkins or even of my passion for gambling?"

He reflected bitterly that it was always so with religious people: the gospel of forgiveness was a favorite theory with them, but most uncongenial in practice.

Gwendolen only required a certain amount of pressing to take her to Blarney. Coryton had told Wilfrid at Les Douleurs that Mrs. de Courcy Miles might be trusted to see to that, but Mrs. de Courcy Miles, with all her boasted social astuteness, was painfully destitute of tact in dealing with such a girl as Gwendolen and her dogmatic methods of argument had often had the effect of confirming the girl in her rebellions. It was perhaps the strongest proof of Gwendolen's real wish to come to Blarney, that she consented to do so in spite of her aunt's ill-judged nagging.

Anyhow, here was Gwendolen at Blarney after all. It was not until she was actually on her way there that she fully realized what a concession she was making. By all rights, he should have come to her and abased himself before her, like the prodigal that he was, and implored her to be graciously pleased to accord her forgiveness. And that forgiveness she would not have required very, very long persuasion to induce her to concede. Her pride rebelled again at the idea of coming thus to his house, as *his* guest, in obedience to *his* command, at the very first beck. And yet there remained in her a sufficiency of sex to make her heart confess that, in spite of all, she was glad to have consented. Do what she would, her heart leaped joyously within her at the prospect of seeing "her boy" once more.

Their first meeting was somewhat constrained, for

he had missed her at the station after all and, as a number of people were present, it was impossible to make much display of emotion.

"I hear you have become quite a traveller, Wilfrid," Mrs. de Courcy Miles exclaimed with a show of heartiness. "Gwen and I have been looking forward so much to getting you to give us all your experiences. Can't say the German waters have agreed with you, though," she added, imagining she was displaying a tender solicitude. "You'll have to take to cub-hunting or something to get you back your color."

"How d'you do, Wilfrid?"

"Why, Gwen!"

That was all, but their eyes lighted up as they shook hands, and Lady Giddy whispered to Violet that she believed there must be something in it after all.

Violet smiled. "Poor old Pigeon," was all she said.

During dinner the conversation had been boisterous and general. Tyrconnel tried to engage Gwendolen upon such a safe topic as a recent discovery of pottery in the neighborhood, but she answered in a way that, without actually conveying a snub, made it almost impossible to follow up the subject. Moreover, she seemed to prefer to discuss Jacobitism with her other neighbor, Rupert Clifford, and to enter upon a dogmatic eulogy of Hampden, which sadly disconcerted that very polite gentleman.

It was not until some time after dinner, just when that little scene was being enacted between Coryton and Violet in the conservatory, that she found the opportunity she had been seeking of having private speech with Wilfrid in one of the many nooks for which Blarney was famous.

"You may have thought me rude," she said, settling herself in a window seat of the library and making room for him by her side, "but I couldn't 'make talk' with you at dinner on all sorts of trivial subjects, when my heart was full and sad."

"Sad! Gwendolen," he whispered reproachfully; "I hoped that you were happy to see me again, after all these ages. I thought you would be content to let bygones be bygones."

"Ah! Wilfrid, bygones never can be completely bygones. One may forgive, but one cannot so easily forget. The wounds of the heart are far more serious and slow to heal than those of the body. I am of a different temperament to you. I believe you suffer acutely and then shake your suffering off, never to think of it again. That I cannot do. What I have suffered all these months you can never know. If I live to be a hundred, I shall never forget the shame of it all."

"The shame!"

"Yes, the shame. We were to be all in all to each other, to fight the good fight side by side. You had promised me to turn over a new leaf, yet scarcely were you out of my sight than I heard of your backsliding. Some dreadful orgy far into the night, bringing you into conflict with the authorities and compelling them to expel you from the University. The details of that affair I have never sought to know. The shame of it was enough for me. As we then stood to one another, your shame was my shame."

"Don't be too hard upon me for the folly of an unguarded hour."

"Do not talk to me of an 'unguarded hour.' I have no patience with such nonsense. You forget the pain to me of having so misplaced my confidence. I thought I could trust you, Wilfrid. It was hard,—very, very hard,—to find how unworthy you were of being loved."

"Oh! Gwen," was all he could say, in a low, choked voice.

"Yes, Wilfrid," she replied, looking him full in the face with her big, mournful guardian angel's eyes. "It has been a sad, sad time. It hurts me even now to think of it. I am ready to believe that all this has been a lesson to you, I will try to believe that you are going to turn over a new leaf. But the old trust is dead and cannot be brought back to life and, without that trust, there can be no such thing as perfect love. Until you have given practical proof of your repentance, how can you expect me to believe in you? It is heart-breaking to me to have to speak to you like this, but what else can I say?"

"Say that you forgive me."

"It is not of me that you must ask forgiveness. There is only One who can forgive sins."

And she turned up the whites of her big eyes.

"Give me a chance, Gwen," he pleaded humbly. "I have had a lesson which has made an altered man of me. Let us forget all about it."

"That can scarcely be."

And she pressed her beautiful lips austere together.

"But you do not throw me over entirely. It is not all at an end between us. Only tell me there is still hope for me."

"There is always hope. Hope remains long after all else is lost."

"You will marry me some day, if—if you find that you can believe in me again," he pleaded with gathering joy, as he read the light of love beaming on him from her bright eyes.

"That is for the future to decide," she replied in softer tones than she had yet used.

The hum of the guests in the drawing-room sounded very far off. There was a solemn hush in the lofty room with its wilderness of books; only the wood-fire crackled cheerfully in the big old-fashioned grate and set bogie-like shadows dancing in the corners of the room. The two reading-lamps, with their scarlet shades, gave out a dim rosiness, which transfigured—as limelight transfigures—the calm, holy expression of the ice-maiden. It was the very scene, with all appropriate surroundings, for a declaration. Soft music was alone required to make it theatrically complete. The sensation of this came over them both suddenly and they looked into each other's eyes with all the old tenderness. A blush spread over Gwendolen's face, giving it another and a deeper coating of color to that which she owed to the scarlet lamp shades. His hand stole into hers and she made an instinctive movement as if to withdraw it, then changed her mind and let it rest in his. He bent down and reverently imprinted a kiss on her long, white fingers.

"I love you, Wilfrid," she said with infinite ten-

derness. "I love you very, very dearly. I only wish you to be true to yourself. I pray night and morning, and shall pray so long as I have breath, that you may have grace to withstand temptation."

"Hullo, there you are," Lord Pimlico's hearty voice broke startlingly upon their ears as they came out into the corridor. "We've been looking for you everywhere. They're getting up a game of cutlets. Rippin' fun. Come along. The Archdeaconess began the game on Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle's knees and has been exacting the funniest forfeits from that stupid little Seemann."

And he hurried on after his cousin, Theodora Gargoyle, who had a little more sense of the fitness of things than he and preferred not to wait Gwendolen's answer.

"Yes, come along," said Violet, who had come up just then, on her way from the conservatory with Coryton. "We needn't join in Pim's mad games and one can always talk best in a rowdy crowd."

"Have you just come into a fortune, Pidge, old chap?" asked Coryton with a cold malevolent gleam in his eyes that belied the geniality of his words. He took Tyrconnel's arm and they fell into line behind the girls, who were turning their steps towards the drawing-room.

"Fortune seems at last to be turning her nose my way," replied Tyrconnel, blushing violently. "I mustn't say too much. But,—but I was sure that you would be glad to know—that you would like to congratulate me."

Coryton did not betray the faintest annoyance at this unwelcome intelligence, for which, after all, he was not unprepared. He simply patted his friend on the shoulder as if with encouraging friendliness, and they entered the drawing-room.

If the noise of a crowd is the best accompaniment to quiet conversation, as Violet had had the effrontery to tell Gwendolen, those two young ladies had come in for an unique opportunity. The game of "cutlets" had just come to its usual abrupt termination and all the players were struggling on their backs on the floor, emitting peal after peal of uproarious merriment.

The Archdeaconess was wagging her feet and hands, like a beetle on its back waiting to be turned over; Miss Connecticut was emitting that shrill transatlantic scream which is so distressing to European ears; while Pimlico, who was only present as a spectator, sat on the edge of the high fender and panted forth a wild spluttering laugh that rose and fell in unmusical cadence. Miss Mudlark put her thumb in her mouth and tried to look innocent when she perceived that Miss Haviland was among the arrivals. Indeed the latter's presence seemed to act somewhat as a wet blanket upon the high spirits of the party and the hilarity soon died away, as the players gradually regained their feet.

Lady Giddy proposed "a quieter game," which elicited ribald remarks about the quietness of the preceding one. Pimlico protested that the only quiet game he knew was baccarat. Theodora proposed an adjournment to the billiard-room for pool and Williams moved an amendment, which was seconded by Wilmot, in favor of "blow-marble" on the billiard-table, but everybody declared they were too much out of breath. Of course Miss Mudlark wanted to have "blow-marble" explained to her.

"It's very simple," volunteered Violet. "You pick up sides and then it's like football. The captain blows off the marble and then everybody tries to blow it through the opposite side's goal. You mayn't touch either the marble or the table during the game. Last time we played it, Pim's and Theo's mouths met in the middle of the table and Lady Elizabeth declares they became so engrossed in each other that they forgot to blow."

There was a general laugh and Theodora shouted, "Shut up, I never play that childish game. Come along, who says pool?"

Everybody was soon streaming along the corridor to the billiard-room and a buzz of conversation went before, like the incense that precedes a procession.

"By the way, Pim, what's become of that bay mare of yours, the Smiler?"—"Gone to the knackers, years ago."—"I met old Wigglesworth at the Alhambra last

week, trying to do the mash.”—“Fie! Mr. Coryton, what were you doing at the Alhambra?”—“You don’t say so! I am astonished. Known her ever since she was a baby, just about so high, that’s all.”—“He’s in luck. Quite good looking and such a fortune!”—“Yes, such good fortune with such good looks!”—“According to the canon law, Lady Elizabeth, a dynasty only acquires a prescriptive right when a hundred years have elapsed without a protest.”—“Yes, yes, Mr. Clifford, but what does the agricultural laborer care about canon law, or indeed any law for the matter of that?”—“Eight and nine seven times in succession. I never heard of such a bank.”—“Oh! no one reads newspapers nowadays, least of all the folks who write them.”—“England ceased to be England when cock-fighting went out of fashion.”—“My dear Mr. Gaverigan, you are hopeless. I believe you would like us all to go about with a fig-leaf, because it was the fashion before the flood.”—“Well, some of us do.”—“Pray be quiet, Mrs. Miles will overhear you. She’s touchy about that dress.”—“Dress, do you call it?”—“I think I shall slip off to bed.”—“Oh! don’t go yet. Pim’ll probably take a bank presently.”—“It was a regular ding-dong finish, and the filly——” “I don’t believe a word of it.”—“Well, I have got eyes.”—“Humph! I hope you haven’t got a tongue too.”—“Oh! no, I have not got that.”

CHAPTER XX.

A MINISTERIAL RECEPTION.

Tout le monde est assommant. Il n'y a de tolérable que les gens qui me plaisent, uniquement parcequ'ils me plaisent.—GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

CORYTON had an interview with Lord Southwark before he left Blarney. A few weeks after, a brief paragraph found its way into sundry of the Government organs, to the effect that the Marquess of Southwark had appointed Mr. Walpole Coryton to be his private secretary.

Coryton entered upon his duties at once. They were not arduous, for Lord Southwark was by no means an exacting man. The post he held in the Government was one of great dignity, but small responsibility. The possession of it entitled the holder to Cabinet rank and high precedence. The departmental work was slight, and parliamentary duties consisted chiefly in piloting Government measures, about whose passing there could be no doubt, through the House of Lords, duties which Lord Southwark performed with admirable grace and skill. He was a *persona grata* at Court, and therefore raised no murmur when he was told off, somewhat frequently, as Minister in attendance. Those who did not know him wondered a little why Lord Southwark went in for politics at all. He was an enormously wealthy peer, wealthy enough to buy almost any further honors he might desire, and great wealth means great influence even in these days, when pocket-boroughs are not. But Lord Southwark did not care to buy his honors; he left that to the "beerage," and he had some old-world theories about *noblesse oblige*. So, though he refused the Irish Vice-

royalty because it was too much trouble, he accepted this other post, possibly because he courted the blue ribbon of the Garter, or because he thought that a Cabinet office—as Prince Bismarck is said to have remarked of the throne of Bulgaria—would always be “a pleasant reminiscence.”

Though not exactly the sort of Minister who moulds the destinies of nations, Lord Southwark was an exceedingly clever man, and he liked to have clever people about him. There could be no doubt about Coryton's cleverness; it was evidenced quite as much by what he did not do as by what he did, and this his chief was quick to find out. Though he did not hold Lord Beaconsfield's views as to the value of private secretaries, and though he was by no means overburdened by generosity—for the generosity of the wealthy is generally in an inverse ratio to their means—Lord Southwark gave Coryton an additional £300 a year to the official £200 accredited him in Whittaker, and a corresponding amount of private work of his own. He also admitted him to a certain degree of his confidence, and with something of the feeling with which one likes to back a winning horse, helped him forward in many little ways.

For Coryton was a winning horse; there could be no doubt of that. He had got his foot firmly planted on the bottom rung of the ladder which leads to fame. He might slip, as many a one has done before, but at present all seemed to go well with him, and he was spoken of everywhere among his friends and acquaintances as a coming man. Others have been spoken of so too, but they are always coming and never come.

Coryton's great obstacle was scarcity of money, but his appointment to Lord Southwark brought him, in these early days, what was almost as good—credit. So with a certain amount of cash in hand and by making a point of never paying for anything which he could get upon credit, he was able to float along for the present excellently well. This sort of thing could not go on forever, of course—the day of reckoning must come—but then he would be married to Violet and she could settle his bills.

"That is the truest function of a wife," he thought with an amused smile, as he pictured to himself how enraged Violet would be when she knew the real state of affairs. Their love-affair was a matter of sympathy and interest combined, but the interest played as strong a part in it as the sympathy. "After all," he thought, "what matter? The emotion between the sexes called love is generally part selfish and part animal."

Coryton settled down in London in October, just as town was beginning to fill again a little, and he took chambers on the second floor of a house in Piccadilly overlooking the Green Park. He was keenly alive to the advantages of a good address and appearance. He furnished his chambers handsomely, partly on credit and partly on the proceeds of a check given to him by that grateful parent, Lord Baltinglass of Blarney. His dress was always perfect—it would be so of course with one who had *carte blanche* at Savile Row; moreover, remembering the words of the immortal Mr. Vigo, he affected a certain slight severity of style which befitted a budding statesman. He was elected a member of the Bachelor's, and his name was down for White's and shortly coming up for the Carlton. He was always very civil to any journalists who might come in his way; he paid assiduous court to Dowagers, and was to be seen regularly at Sunday morning service at a fashionable church.

He had a good many introductions, of course. The fact of his being private secretary to a Cabinet Minister—especially a Minister of Lord Southwark's social position—was an introduction in itself. He soon had more invitations than he could accept, and more than he cared for.

"As a rule the people who want to know one are the people one doesn't want to know," he muttered to himself as he tore up two or three dinner invitations which emanated from Kensington-this-side-of-Jordan and threw them into the waste-paper basket. "It is all right to eat these people's dinners," he continued, "but it is a little awkward when one comes across them full-tilt in the Park afterwards. And these sort

of people are always in the Park—it is their happy meeting ground—and they never seem to know when you have had enough of them. They should be content to exist for dinner purposes only.”

A good many quondam friends of the late Judge-Advocate-General turned up again too. They had forgotten all about the son. But now that he seemed to be working his way to the front and was not likely to want anything of them, they came and looked him up, and bade him welcome to their houses.

Coryton accepted their hospitality in the spirit in which it was offered. He could not afford to bear any resentments, even if he had felt them. But he did not. He would have acted in precisely the same way himself under similar circumstances, and his was a philosophy which takes life and human nature as it finds them. “He who lives for himself lives for but a little thing,” it has been truly said; yet it is very difficult to find anything else to live for.

So the months went by and the fogs came and went, and the dismal thing called Christmas came and went, and the New-Year’s bills came and didn’t go, and Parliament opened and the Queen’s Speech (so-called)—not more ungrammatical than such speeches generally are, and not more stuffed than usual with platitudes and impossible schemes of reform,—was read by a queer little man in a wig and gown whom some called the “Lord High Jobber,” and the business of the Session began.

It didn’t mean much extra work for Coryton, beyond that he had to keep a sharp eye on the “Notices for the Day” and to haunt the lobby of the House of Lords four afternoons in the week, or stand below the Bar sometimes when a dull and decorous debate, in which Lord Southwark took part, was going on. The work of a private secretary, whose chief is in the House of Lords—unless that chief should happen to be at the head of a great department—is to a certain extent ornamental, and this part of his duties Coryton was able to fulfil to a nicety, for he posed as a sucking politician to the manner born. It was only on those rare occasions, when he

had to attend a debate in the House of Commons, that he felt the full fascination of political life, and heard as it were, the great heart of the nation throb.

Lord Southwark, in addition to his other advantages, possessed a beautiful house and a beautiful wife. The office-seekers and bottle-washers of the Party, who are apt to be envious, said it was these things, rather than his abilities, which had advanced Lord Southwark to so prominent a place in the councils of the nation. It was probably the combination of all these factors, though there might have been some truth in the sneer, for the Party was badly in want of another house whereat to rally its forces. The dreary functions at the Prime Minister's, where people were asked by the letters of the Alphabet, the A's to L's one night, and the M's to Z's another; where the hostess ostentatiously showed her contempt for the greater number of her guests by turning her back upon them and hanging her hand over the banisters to be tugged at like a bell-rope; where the host was wrapped in chilly, unapproachable, Olympian gloom—these functions could scarcely be described as inspiring. Doubtless though, Mr. Toadey-Snaile, M.P. for Mudford, and Mrs. Toadey-Snaile, whilom Mayor and Mayoress of that borough, Mr. Creeper Crawley, Editor of the *Lickworm Gazette*, Mr. Hunter Tuft, the society-promoter—and all the other tag-rag and bobtail of the Party were more than consoled for the snubs they had endured by seeing their names in the paper the next morning, and by thinking of the gall and wormwood with which their less favored friends and intimates would read them there also.

So Lady Southwark, after due consultation with her lord, rose to the occasion and endeavored to found a political salon. The exclusive portals of Southwark House were opened wide, a miracle in itself, for they were generally shut very close indeed. The Southwarks belonged to the inner circle of what was once considered to be the most exclusive aristocracy in Europe; they formed one of Lady Charles Beresford's famous "forty families" who alone she says constitute English society.

"It is a great effort," Lady Southwark confided to Lady Elizabeth Gargoyle, who was a cousin of hers. "These people are not even amusing, they are simply middle-class mediocrities. I am sure that to entertain all those Socialist creatures, Anarchists, and Fenians and things on the other side would be much more exciting."

"The Devil has all the liveliest tunes, my dear," said Lady Elizabeth. She prided herself on her freedom of speech, and so did her daughter Theodora. "Just think what I go through with those dreadful Primrose League teas, don't you know?"

"Oh! but you are a privileged person," objected Lady Southwark discontentedly, as she scanned her "to-be-civil" lists. "However I suppose it can't be helped, Southwark seems to make a point of it and one must do something for one's country."

"Oh! the country isn't in the least danger, I assure you," exclaimed Lady Elizabeth vivaciously. "Are there not the knights-companion, and the Harbingers, and the Dames, and the Esquires? Are not the forces of Clapham and Balham on our side? As I said the other night to that dear delightful Radical person—what is his name? He was in the last Government, you know. I met him at that Jamrack gathering of Lady Vieille's. Every one was there from a pet Princess to a third rate poet—Dear me, Theodora, what was the man's name? I shall forget my own next."

"Marshall," said Theodora laconically without looking up from the poodle she was fondling.

"Marshall—of course, how stupid of me to forget. 'Yes,' I said to him, 'You are a wicked, dangerous man, Mr. Marshall, but we are not a bit afraid of you, for all the snobs are on our side, you know.'"

"That was a little *mal-à-propos*, wasn't it?" queried Lady Southwark languidly. "I hear the creature is going to be married to some colonial person with social ambitions, and is coming over to us. The Duchess of Puffeballe has taken him up. I daresay he will be dining here in the fulness of time. But then he will have become dull."

"Which is another way of saying he will have

become a good Conservative, you naughty thing," said Lady Elizabeth rising. "Well, we really must be going. Theodora has to be present at a drawing-room meeting in aid of broken-down cab-runners, somewhere in Kensington at five o'clock. Let me know if you want any additions to your list. Theodora knows all those sort of people, don't you know, and so do I—only I forget their names. Theodora doesn't. Good-bye."

Lady Southwark, however, managed her invitations excellently well without the help of Theodora. Mr. Coryton came to her assistance instead, and it was really remarkable, considering the short time he had been in town, how much he knew about "those sort of people." It was not a very difficult task, they had only to prune down the Prime Minister's omnium-gatherum lists a little, and the thing was done, at least so far as the invitations were concerned. But Lady Southwark was *grande dame* to her finger-tips and, having made up her mind to do the thing, she did it well, and had a gracious smile, and a kindly word for all the motley throng who pressed up the broad marble staircase of the Southwark Mansion. She was a perfect hostess. Ambassadors, diplomats, Peers and Peeresses, Bishops and monsignori, Cabinet Ministers, provincial Tory M.P's with their provincial wives and daughters, and the other odds and ends, who figure at the tail of a gathering of this kind—all were welcomed with equal and gracious courtesy.

It was at the last of these receptions, about the middle of March, that Coryton met Violet again.

He had been dining with Pimlico that evening and they had been to the Gaiety together on the strict principle of "each pay his own." They understood one another excellently well, did these two.

"I suppose I'd better show up at my mother's menagerie, otherwise these things are not much in my line," said Lord Pimlico superciliously, as they picked up a hansom in the Strand and rattled westward together. "But we will go on to the Stephanotis Club after. In the meantime it will do to kill an hour."

On his arrival, Pimlico was promptly pounced upon by Theodora, who had hitherto been joining in a three-cornered conversation which her mother was carrying on with the Turkish Ambassador. She hailed Pimlico with delight and they went off to talk dogs and horses together, subjects on which Theodora knew almost as much as he did.

Coryton, left to himself, made his way leisurely through the crowd and exchanged greetings here and there. The spacious rooms were very full, for this was the last reception before Easter and there was a foreign prince present, whom Lord and Lady Southwark had entertained at dinner together with the ambassador who represented the Prince's country, and other notabilities. Coryton caught sight of the Prime Minister in the second room, standing apart from the crowd, the Star of the Garter flashing on his breast, his craggy brow bent forward a little, and a smile upon his lips as he exchanged a few words with an extremely pretty girl in a heliotrope gown caught up with sprays of clematis. It was only a few words, for the great man's attention was claimed almost immediately by some one else, and as he moved away with a bow and a smile the girl turned also, and Coryton saw that it was Violet. She caught sight of him at once and greeted him with a sunny smile.

"Confess," she said, "you are surprised to see me here."

"And delighted," he replied. "The pleasure is all the greater because it is unexpected. I had no idea you were in town."

"I only came up to-day," she said, "and I knew I should meet you here this evening, so I did not trouble to let you know. I am staying with Lady Giddy in Seymour Street. She has brought me to-night—Oh!" she went on in answer to his questioning glance, "I don't know where she is now. It is impossible to keep close to any one in the crush; and she disappeared with Wilfrid Tyrconnel five minutes ago. He is here and Lord Baltinglass too. Quite a meeting of old friends, isn't it? I have been amusing myself quizzing the people and trying to make them

out—Come, Poley, find me a seat, and then you shall tell me who they all are.”

“I found you talking to the most distinguished of them all,” he said, as they made their way into a third and comparatively empty room and sat down on one of the Louis-seize couches near the door.

“The Prime Minister—Ah! I knew you would wonder how I came to know him. Well, we met on the Riviera this January—he was there just before Parliament opened—and, do you know? he took rather a fancy to me. So I smiled straight at him when I saw him to-night—it does not do to let oneself be forgotten, he may be useful to us some day. Great men have short memories, is it not so?”

Coryton looked at her admiringly.

“You are a wonderful woman, Vixie,” he said.

“And you are a wonderful boy, Poley,” she answered. “Oh! I hear about you a good deal. Every one tells me how fast you are getting on. Together we shall be so wonderful that we shall carry everything before us. And you will soon win fame.”

“Fame,” he repeated musingly, “that is to be known by people whom you don’t know, isn’t it?”

“Precisely, Mr. Commonplace Book. But there is nothing better in this life.”

“Oh yes, there is,” he said, “to realize the dream of one’s youth before one is middle-aged. That is what I shall do when I marry you, Vi.”

She looked at him almost affectionately. They were not in the habit of paying one another compliments, these two, but just now each was very much pleased with the other. Perhaps also she cared for him more than a little. She was certainly attracted to him. His physical beauty appealed to her senses and women are always more sensible to such influences than men. Added to which, she thought he was fairly well off—not rich of course—but his income, judging from the style in which he lived—must be a thousand or two a year at the least—or even more, for he might be holding himself in reserve. That was little enough to a young woman of Violet’s expensive tastes, but then he

was a man who was likely to make more, and win honors besides. Success was written on his brow.

She felt quite proud of him as they talked together and watched the ever-shifting crowd. Lady Giddy was an admirable chaperone,—she left her charge to look after herself.

"You must not realize all your dreams when you marry me, Poley," said Violet presently, harking back to the point at which they started, "or there will be a rude awakening. Our marriage must be the starting point—of fresh opportunities. Every one has opportunities,—some find them, others make them."

"And some miss them," interpolated Coryton.

"But those are the people who lack either money or brains," she rejoined. "We shall have both."

"True," said Coryton brightening visibly at the mention of the magic word money and pressing the little hand which lay so near his own. "Together we shall do all things. You are my 'affinity' you know, Vi."

She gave a merry laugh and drew her hand away.

"You talk as though you were one of the 'Souls,' Poley. Don't try to be sentimental; it doesn't suit you. We are not Gwendolen and her young man, you know."

Coryton acquiesced very philosophically.

"By the way, have you seen anything of Gwendolen?" he asked.

Violet pouted.

"Not for ages," she said. "Not since Blarney. But we are to meet in the season, I believe. We correspond—pages. Her letters bore me. The fact is, she bores me too. She is too good for this world. She is only fit for Paradise."

"Poor Paradise," murmured Coryton, "it must be a tiresome place if it be peopled only by those sweet saints whose society we so much dread below."

Violet laughed again. She was always laughing. She had such pretty, pearly teeth.

"It is lucky the Pigeon does not hear you," she exclaimed. "Poor Pigeon! I wonder what Lady Giddy is doing with him all this time. . . . Oh! here

they are. Talk of angels and you hear the rustle of their wings. . . . What was I laughing at so immoderately, dear Lady Giddy? At those little Orientals over yonder with their backs to the wall. They have been posted there like wax images the whole evening, and such quaint dresses too! Who are they?"

"Some of the staff of the Chinese or Japanese legation most probably," answered Lady Giddy with a careless glance. "Oh! do look at Lady Pfarrerheim, Violet! Did you *ever* see such a sight!"

"Who is Lady Pfarrerheim?"

"That woman near the door in the very *decolletée* dress," replied Lady Giddy, whose own charms were not too closely veiled. "She is one of the *haute Juiverie*. Such an affected creature, enormously rich, but she never wears an atom of jewellery."

"Nor much of anything else it would seem," said Coryton with a laugh. "I have often heard that women dress less to be clothed than to be adorned, but I never realized it quite so vividly before."

"She is evidently of opinion that beauty unadorned is adorned the most," said Violet. "But tell me, who is the man she has been talking to so earnestly? Not the Duke of Puffeballe, I know him, but that other man, with the swarthy face."

"No one much," replied Coryton indifferently. "One would wonder how he got here, except that he contrives to push himself everywhere. He is a professional philanthropist I believe."

"Dear me," said Lady Giddy waving her fan, "professional philanthropist! what is that?"

"A man who lives in the West and talks about the East. It is quite a lucrative profession if one only talks loud enough. This man has found it so. As he was very, very poor and obscure he went in for philanthropy—the cheapest form of advertisement going."

"If he was very poor I don't quite see how he could help poverty much," said Tyrconnel with a puzzled air. He had talked much about philanthropy with Gwendolen, and their schemes always meant spending a good deal of money.

"Oh! it is quite easy," said Coryton. "If you have no money of your own, you are charitable at the expense of other people. You get just the same amount of credit—rather more in point of fact. It is merely an extended application of the saying of Sydney Smith's. A never sees B in trouble, without thinking that C ought to help him. . . . But come, Vixie, shall we go downstairs? People are beginning to go. The crush will be over now."

In the supper-room they came across Theodora and Pimlico. That youth was evidently impatient to be gone, and asked Coryton if he wasn't ready to "make tracks."

"That is very rude of you, when you see he is with me," said Violet.

"Yes, but you are going to make tracks too, aren't you? There is nothing to do. If there were only a sit-down supper, it would be something—but this sort of thing,"—here he gave a contemptuous glance in the direction of the long buffet—"Why my mother fills her house with all sorts of bounders she doesn't know anything about, fairly stumps me. . . . More fiz, Theo. No? Then let me put your glass down."

"It is certainly very decorous and very dull," laughed Violet. "Even the gowns are all of a Lenten hue. If there had only been some music, it would have helped us on a little. Conversation, I fear me, is a lost art. However I have accomplished what I came for, which was to have a chat with you, Poley, and now I must be going, for I see Lady Giddy looking towards us. We shall be in at five to-morrow, don't forget."

"You are coming with Corry and me, Pigeon, aren't you?" queried Pimlico a few minutes later. They were all three standing together, cloaked and hatted, in the vestibule, waiting for a hansom.

"It is the first I have heard about it," rejoined Tyrconnel. "Where are you going?"

"To the Stephanotis for an hour or so,—just to take the taste of this sort of thing out of our mouths."

"I—I—I—am afraid it's a little late. I think I shall turn in," stammered Tyrconnel irresolutely.

"It is not half-past twelve yet," said Coryton, "but as you please, of course."

"What rot!" ejaculated Pimlico—"I can't think what's come over you, Pigeon. Why, there'll be a lot of fellows there you know, Gaverigan, Forbes, all the rest of them—and I daresay Pussie Prancewell too, and Sally Popkins."

A swift change swept over Tyrconnel's face at the mention of the latter name.

"I am sorry," he said decidedly, "but I cannot come." He looked towards Coryton as he spoke.

Coryton said nothing.

"Well," exclaimed Pimlico in a huff, "if you won't, you won't. I don't care. Come on, Corry, we can't wait about here all night. If we walk a few steps we shall pick up a hansom."

Nevertheless when they were bowling down Piccadilly, he returned again to the subject.

"I can't think what's come over Pigeon. He's quite a different chap to what he used to be. Is he going in for piety, or what?"

"He is going in for matrimony—with a good girl," said Coryton quietly, lighting a cigarette.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT THE LEVEE.

"Vanity of Vanities," saith the preacher, "Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity."—ECCLESIASTES.

It was a little before two o'clock on a sunny May afternoon. There was an air of subdued excitement in the vicinity of Marlborough House and St. James's Palace, and a gaping crowd of the vulgar had gathered itself together at the corner of Pall Mall; a crowd which extended up St. James's Street in one direction, and down towards the Park in the other. For the

Prince of Wales was about to hold a Levée by command of the Queen, and the street was bright with uniforms and an incessant stream of vehicles was driving up the side entrance of St. James's Palace. The crowd, with that love of "dressing up" which seems inherent in the human race, looked on and gaped.

Among the men who rattled up in a hansom was Coryton wearing a regulation black velvet suit. He entered the Palace, and having handed one of his two cards to the gorgeous being in the corridor known as the Queen's Page, went up the stairs and found himself in the midst of a panting, pushing crowd in the outermost ante-room.

It was a largely attended Levée—more than usually so for there had been a Royal wedding, or some such event, and loyal subjects were more than usually eager to pay their respects to their Sovereign.

It was an odd spectacle. A number of commonplace and estimable elderly gentlemen had impaired their digestions by hurrying over an early luncheon, and had made themselves uncomfortable by arraying themselves in sundry unusual and grotesque garments, in which they vainly strove to look as little ridiculous as possible.

There was a worthy old country squire, for instance, who had never before ventured on any color but "pink," masquerading in the gorgeous apparel of a Deputy-Lieutenant; there was a High Sheriff, whose attenuated legs were never meant for silk stockings, but who had donned them in order to be presented by the Lord Lieutenant of his county. We say "his county" with reserve, for he hadn't much to do with it, albeit he was High Sheriff. The evolution of a High Sheriff nowadays is a comparatively rapid process. A wealthy stock-jobber or something of that ilk, buys a place in the country,—not much of a place necessarily—but he must have plenty of ready cash. He restores a church perchance, subscribes liberally to the hounds and local charities, and then the Lord Lieutenant gets him put on the county bench. In a very short time he will be "pricked" for the office of High Sheriff of his county, though he may have

known nothing about the county ten years before. Is it small wonder, under the circumstances, that the impecunious but *bona fide* country gentlemen are agitating for the abolition of this once honored office?

There was a stout old general, puffing and blowing in a uniform, which was very much too tight for him now. There was an endless variety of uniforms, varied here and there by the black gowns and Geneva bands of a sprinkling of ecclesiastics, and by the sober court-dresses of the civilians. There were several Orientals present too, whose gaudy raiment gave a touch of color to the scene. There was in fact the usual collection of somebodies and nobodies—though, as most of the somebodies enjoyed the privilege of the *entrée*, the nobodies predominated here.

Conspicuous among them was the well-known "Society-promoter" Mr. Hunter Tuft who had religiously attended Levées for years in the vain hope of favors to come, but has never received the slightest recognition from the Court—not even an invitation to a Marlborough House Garden-party. Poor Hunter Tuft! he was no nearer his cherished goal now, than when he commenced his upward career in Kensington-beyond-Jordan, twenty years ago. All the same he entertained ambassadors and ambassadresses at his club and was an adjunct to every fashionable wedding in Belgravia. He consoled himself for Court neglect by saying airily, "The Marlborough House set is so very mixed you know." The Royal favor is ever sour grapes to the many, sweet to the few.

Mr. Toadey-Snaile, M.P., was also here of course, and many other M.P.'s of the same kidney, who take care that their presence at the Levée is duly chronicled in the local papers of their respective constituencies. It all tends to help them with the Knights and Dames of Primrose Habitations, or with the Radicals who love a lord—often the greatest snobs of all. Here was Creeper-Crawley, who had managed to crawl in by the back door somehow. He represented Letters perchance, since the more eminent men in that line were conspicuous by their absence. Here

was our old friend Sir Cincinnatus Spread eagle, with his greasy locks well-oiled, and clad in a gaudy Militia uniform, prepared to shed the last drop of his blood in defence of his Queen and country, as he said in that never-to-be-forgotten after-dinner speech in the House of Commons. They were all here, kicking their heels and chattering glibly to one another.

Coryton saw a good many faces he knew, as he looked around and pressed slowly onward, urged forward by the ever-increasing crowd behind. Suddenly he espied a familiar form arrayed in an unfamiliar garb. It was Tyrconnel. His back was towards Coryton. He was apparently looking blankly at the quaint tapestry on the wall, but he turned round quickly as Coryton tapped him on the shoulder and asked:

"Que diable, Pigeon, viens-tu faire dans cette galère?"

"I might return the question," rejoined Tyrconnel, smiling all over his face at this unexpected meeting.

"I—oh! it's my first appearance," said Coryton. "Lord Southwark is presenting me."

"I haven't been to a Levée this year, and my father insisted on my showing up at this one. Not that it makes the slightest difference to any one whether I do so or not—and it's a horrid bore," said Tyrconnel, ruefully trying to disentangle his sword from between his legs.

"An imperative duty, the patriotic Spread eagle would tell you," corrected Coryton. "See how important he looks. As for Creeper Crawley yonder, it is the proudest moment of his life."

"It is one of the most uncomfortable moments of mine," panted Tyrconnel, "the heat is awful—I wish they would open the windows."

"We must suffer to be beautiful," laughed Coryton. "What are you doing this afternoon? shall we drive to Ranelagh later and dine quietly together?"

"I—I—am going to see Gwen," replied the other, "she's in town, you know. They came up last week."

"Oh, is she?" said Coryton, raising his eyebrows ever so slightly. "I should like to see her too." He

had reasons for being amiable to Gwendolen. "May I come with you? I can take charge of Mrs. de Courcy Miles."

"Do, by all means," exclaimed Tyrconnel, his face brightening. "To tell you the truth, that old woman is an awful trial. She is always pestering me with questions about Lord This and Lady That—I can hardly get in a word with Gwen edgeways."

"Old woman indeed!" laughed Coryton, "it is lucky for your *beau yeux* she doesn't hear you. However, I will simply satiate her with the Peerage if it pleases you. It's all in a day's work. By Jove!" as they were urged forward. "What a crowd there is! We shall go past the Prince at a trot, I expect."

"When we get to him. We've got to squeeze through two or three more rooms first," said Tyrconnel resignedly. "The dodge, I believe, is to come late and then one can simply walk through the rooms at the tail of the procession without any delay at all. That is what Forbes says he does; but one day he cut it too fine and found the whole show over, and the palace shut up. But hark!" as the sound of music floated up from below. "Here is the Prince arriving, the crush will soon ease itself now."

Half an hour later they were both standing under the old gateway of St. James's Palace.

"What a pity you tripped over your sword at the supreme moment, Pigeon," said Coryton cruelly. "You made quite a sensation. I shouldn't be surprised if you find yourself figuring in the comic papers. However, it's over now. Let us walk up the street a little way and hail a hansom. It's no use waiting here. As soon as I have changed these togs I will come round with you. No; on second thoughts, I'll follow you later. Where are they staying?"

"405b, Park Street," said the crestfallen Tyrconnel, ruefully regarding his damaged sword. "But you don't mean what you said about the comic papers, do you, old man—I hate being laughed at."

"No, it was only my fun, that'll be all right," laughed Coryton reassuringly—"Here's a hansom. Jump in, and let's get out of this gaping crowd."

CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. MILES'S SEASON.

"While tumbling down the turbid stream,
Lord love us, how we apples swim!"

—DAVID MALLET.

"What a monstrous tail our cat has got!"

—HENRY CAREY.

MRS. DE COURCY MILES had come up to town for the season and had brought Gwendolen with her. She was in the habit of coming to town for the season, albeit in a general way the season and Mrs. de Courcy Miles had about as much to do with one another as the groves of Camberwell have to do with the gilded saloons of Mayfair. But this year Mrs. de Courcy Miles had hooked herself on to the skirts of Mayfair; that is to say she had sufficiently moved up in the world to hire three rooms on the second floor of a house in the little street which runs along the back of Park Lane, and which may be therefore said to have a sort of illegitimate relationship with that aristocratic region. True, the house in question abutted on Oxford Street, but Mrs. Miles, who knew the value of a good address, duly announced herself and Miss Haviland as "arriving at 405b Park Street, Grosvenor Square, for the season." The announcement was not of the faintest possible interest to any one save Mrs. Miles herself, and perhaps a few Cambridge and Kensington-beyond-Jordan friends, who not knowing the precise geographical position of 405b, gnashed their teeth with impotent spleen and wondered "how that woman did it."

Mrs. Miles, moreover, followed up the announcement by driving round in a hired brougham and leaving her cards on every imaginable person with whom she could

by any possibility consider herself to be on calling terms. These tactics combined with rumors of the coming Baltinglass alliance, secured a certain number of invitations, issued more on Gwendolen's account than on her own. In fact, it seemed to Mrs. Miles that they were launched on a perfect whirl of dissipation.

Her other seasons, truth to tell—though she would have died rather than own it even to herself—had not been altogether a success.

"I really could not exist without my London season, it does brush away the provincial cobwebs so," she was in the habit of telling her Cambridge friends. Then she would launch forth into descriptions of sundry smart parties, of which she knew nothing but what the papers told her.

Her Cambridge friends, who knew even less than she, could not contradict her. But it was all imaginary. Mrs. Miles's "season" consisted in point of fact of three weeks in a second-rate lodging in a second-rate street, of frequent promenades in the Park and a religious attendance of church parade, of sundry exhibitions, of a close inspection of shop-windows, a few theatres, a visit to the Academy—all these sort of people always go to the Academy—and possibly a tea or two in Bayswater or Kensington. Then she returned to Cambridge, and declared herself utterly done up with the fatigues of her "season."

But this year she was more successful. She had squeezed an extra £100 out of the Professor and brought up Gwendolen. The Baltinglasses were not much good from a social point of view in spite of their wealth—a fact surely more due to Miss Tyrconel's Evangelical opinions than to Lord Baltinglass's vulgarity—for society will swallow any pill if it be only sufficiently gilded. But Lady Giddy helped somewhat, with an eye to future possibilities, and that doubtless also accounted for many of the invitations which found their way to 405b Park Street, Grosvenor Square. The Grosvenor Square was never forgotten. Mrs. Miles even ran to gold-stamped paper in its honor. She was regarding it lovingly now, as she answered

a dinner invitation, which had just come from Miss Tyrconnel.

"Such a good address, and so near the Park too," she said aloud as she closed the envelope. Of course it was stamped on the flap as well.

"It is nearer the Marble Arch," said Gwendolen bluntly. She was looking out, over the boxes of geranium and lady-slipper in the window.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles looked up irritably. She objected to Gwendolen's bald way of putting things.

"Do come away and shut down that window a little," she exclaimed; "I am sure the smell of the lunch must be out of the room by now. Have you put the photographs and the flowers on the table again? Yes, that's right, and the *World*, please, and the *Morning Post*, and a book or two, and the Red Book—pray, Gwendolen, do not forget the Red Book and the Peerage. There now, we will just arrange the chairs a little, and no one will know but that it is a drawing-room only."

"What does it matter whether they know it or not?" said Gwendolen a little wearily.

"Matter!" exclaimed Mrs. Miles shrilly, "of course it matters a very great deal. It is past three o'clock and people might be dropping in any minute."

"And they might not," rejoined Gwendolen drily, with a remembrance born of previous experience.

"And they might not," repeated Mrs. Miles unmoved, "but in any case we must be prepared. And I thought you said Wilfrid Tyrconnel was coming on here after the Levée. I wonder you have not more proper pride, Gwendolen. You forget that we owe a duty to society, you the future Lady Baltinglass of Blarney."

"That is nothing to me—nothing," exclaimed Gwendolen, her face flushing. "I am tired of hearing about it. I am tired of this make-believe and pretence. The title is nothing, the money is nothing. I would marry Wilfrid just as willingly—aye, more so—if he had not a penny in the world."

"You are quite right to tell him so, dear," rejoined Mrs. de Courcy Miles approvingly, "but you needn't waste it upon *me*. Please give me the third volume of

‘Lady Ermyntrude’s Folly.’ It is on the table yonder. We needn’t talk any more until somebody comes.”

So settling herself down in the most comfortable chair, Mrs. Miles was soon lost in her society novel, so-called. It was one of the voluminous series of a well-known lady novelist, who has never viewed society, properly understood, from any nearer point of view than the area railings.

It was not very long before Tyrconnel arrived. He was followed closely by Coryton, who rescued him from Mrs. de Courcy Miles’s clutches, and engaged the whole of that lady’s attention by whispering to her certain coming scandals among the upper ten thousand, which he manufactured as he went along, but which Mrs. Miles listened to as attentively as if they were gospel, in fact a good deal more so.

This gave Tyrconnel and Gwendolen the opportunity they were longing for—a quiet chat together. They withdrew to the shelter of the window-seat and were soon recounting all their thoughts and experiences since last they met, just as though they had not already confided everything to each other in closely written pages of Bath post—six sheets in a budget.

Then they began to discuss their plans. Gwendolen was quite a country cousin, she had so many things she wished to see—two or three plays, *Olivia* for one, and the summer exhibition at the New Gallery. Then she wanted to go to the morning service at Westminster Abbey next Sunday,—would Wilfrid come? They had tickets from the Dean for the choir. And there were several parties she didn’t care much about, save for the chance of meeting him at them, and there was a philanthropic meeting at Crowther Lodge in aid of little Italian children. She didn’t know much about Italian children—organ grinders or otherwise—but she would like to go. Would Wilfrid go with her there too? Of course; he would follow her into the lion’s mouth if need be.

Then they began to talk about their engagement, which had not yet been publicly announced, though it was an open secret among their acquaintance.

“Was Lord Baltinglass more reconciled to it?” she

asked timidly. She had only seen him once since they came to town, but Miss Tyrconnel was on their side.

"And we have to thank Coryton too," said Tyrconnel, "he has great influence with the Guv'nor and has quite talked him round. Oh! yes, there is no longer any obstacle to fear from that quarter. The Guv'nor doesn't like to seem to give his consent too quickly, but he has given it and he's not a man to go back from his word, whatever his faults may be. You see, it will be announced before the end of the season."

"I do not care anything about the announcement," she said, "if only you do not mind waiting for me, Wilfrid."

"Dear one," he said, clasping her hands, "I would wait for you twice seven years, if need be, as Jacob waited for Rachel."

She looked at his flushed and eager face, a great light of trust and love shining in her eyes. The little breeze from the scarcely closed window ruffled her hair about her brow and wafted in a faint fragrance of musk upon the summer air. The shabby room was transformed into an enchanted palace for these two.

Meanwhile Mrs. de Courcy Miles having listened with great relish to a description of the Duchess of Puffeballe's dance which she determined to transcribe on paper (as an eye-witness) at the earliest opportunity for the benefit of the wife of the Vice-Chancellor, descended suddenly to matters more personal. After a side-glance towards the two in the window she asked Coryton in a lowered voice much the same question as the one Gwendolen had already put to Tyrconnel, though from very different motives.

"I think the engagement ought to be announced without delay," she said. "I presume Lord Baltinglass has no objections now that his consent has been virtually given. Have you seen him lately?"

"I met him in the lobby of the House of Lords the other afternoon," replied Coryton in the same confidential tones, "and we talked upon the subject at some length. As you are aware, Lord Baltinglass is

much prepossessed in Miss Haviland's favor, and he has no serious objections to urge; still it is only right for me to tell you that he thinks his son might have looked higher, and——"

"I am sure Gwendolen is qualified to hold her own in any society," interrupted Mrs. Miles tartly, for the objection sounded like a reflection on herself; "which is more than can be said of Lord Baltinglass. What more can the man want?"

"I have no doubt about that," said Coryton, blandly, in his most ultra-Parliamentary manner. "She does indeed, in the highest degree, reflect credit upon your admirable training. One cannot say more than that. But it appears that Lord Baltinglass, after the manner of his kind, had cherished the ambition of his son's allying himself with some great house, and it is the idea of his having to forego this ambition, which has been displeasing to him."

Coryton had reasons of his own for magnifying Lord Baltinglass' reluctance. Mrs. de Courcy Miles looked somewhat blank, though visibly mollified at the compliments paid to her.

"We are dining at Baltinglass House on the 21st," she said.

"I am glad to hear it," said Coryton, "it proves that the conversation between Lord Baltinglass and myself has not been barren of results. As I was about to remark, Lord Baltinglass has now determined to cordially consent to the marriage. He has, as I said before, the highest opinion of Miss Haviland. Her beauty and grace, no less than her sound common-sense, have made a great impression on him, and he is anxious that Wilfrid should marry young and sow his wild oats. Lord Baltinglass is not one who looks lightly on youthful follies, nor need I add, does Miss Tyrconnel. They think an early marriage will be his salvation, and Lord Baltinglass is anxious that there should be no lack of heirs to perpetuate his name. I myself think it is the best thing to be done, for, of course, as you are aware, Lord Baltinglass' vast fortune is entirely at his own disposal, and he is just the sort of man, if angered by some youthful indiscretion, to disinherit Wilfrid."

"He cannot keep him out of the title," said Mrs. Miles.

"True," said Coryton drily, "but a title without money is but little worth—especially a brand new one. It is difficult for an empty bag to stand upright. However, we will not contemplate such a possibility. I only mention it now, as an additional reason for hurrying on the marriage."

"I am sure we are all very much obliged to you, Mr. Coryton," said his listener with effusion.

"Pray do not mention it," he replied with a deprecatory smile, "I am only too glad to be of any little service to my friends, and——"

What he might have added was never uttered, for at that moment a heavy footstep was heard ascending the stairs, and then, to every one's astonishment, the Professor entered the room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PLUCKING OF THE PROFESSOR.

"Professors are admirable persons so long as they confine themselves strictly to the subjects which they profess."—**LORD R. CHURCHILL**: Speech at the University Carlton Club Dinner, Cambridge, June, 1885.

THE Professor seemed unusually flustered and hurried. One hand grasped a carpet-bag and the other the University Don's inevitable umbrella. His broad-brimmed hat was brushed the wrong way. Something had evidently occurred to startle him out of his normal, professorial calm.

"Goodness gracious, James," exclaimed Mrs. Miles, viewing the unexpected visitant with an inhospitable eye. "Whatever brings you here—bursting in upon us like this?"

The Professor did not hear her apparently. He removed his hat and put it upon the table. Then he

saluted Gwendolen solemnly on either cheek, and would have performed a similar ceremony with his sister, had not that lady adroitly avoided it.

"Can I get a bed here to-night, Maria?" he asked in his usual strident tone, after he had shaken hands with the two young men.

Mrs. Miles shuddered. That vulgar name! She always signed herself "Marie."

"Well, yes, I suppose so," she rejoined ungraciously. "If you don't mind going up rather high, that is to say," she added, her thoughts running on a certain little attic up among the tiles.

The Professor looked somewhat doubtful. He knew that attic.

"You can have my room, father," broke in Gwendolen, coming forward and taking him affectionately by the arm.

"Your room! Good gracious! Gwendolen, what are you thinking about?" exclaimed Mrs. Miles sharply. "There's the ball to-night. Who is going to move all your things, I should like to know, and how are you going to manage to dress properly up in that little garret? I won't have you crowding in with me, so don't think it."

Then she paused abruptly, remembering that these domestic details were hardly suitable for discussion before her visitors. To divert attention she turned on the Professor again.

"James," she repeated, "Will you tell me what has brought you up to town in this unexpected manner?"

"Business, my dear, business," rejoined the Professor, sitting down and wiping his spectacles deliberately, "urgent and important business. I had a letter from my broker this morning to say that the Vald'oro Gold Mines were in a very shaky condition, so I wired to him to sell out at once and followed up my telegram in person to see if I cannot find a suitable investment for those two or three thousand pounds. Nothing like being prompt in these matters," he said, looking towards Coryton, with that business-like air which very unbusiness-like people are so fond of assuming.

"Nothing indeed, I quite agree with you," replied

Coryton, his eyes glistening at the mention of those two or three thousand pounds.

"Humph!" ejaculated Mrs. Miles, whose opinion of her brother's business capacities was by no means high. "I hope you won't be taken in, James."

"My dear," rebuked the Professor, loftily, "I am always guided by the advice of my brokers. Though I confess," he added with a momentary hesitation, "they have not always advised me aright."

"Hardly, if they advised Vald'oro Gold Mines," interpolated Coryton with an affectation of superior knowledge. "May I ask who are your brokers, Professor Haviland?"

"Messrs. Grabbit and Shark," replied the Professor. "What! Do you know anything about them?"

"I would rather not say what I know about them," replied Coryton, with commendable caution considering that he knew nothing at all. Then he continued, with the air of one who could say much, and he would: "But, as you know, my position gives me many opportunities of seeing behind the scenes—and if I might venture to advise, I should strongly recommend you not to consult them with reference to future investments. I must not say more—I must not indeed. What I have been told was in the strictest confidence, but my information came from the highest sources—I cannot say more."

"There, James, you hear," broke in Mrs. de Courcy Miles. "Mr. Coryton is the Marquis of Southwark's private secretary and his warning is not to be lightly put aside. What have I always told you about Grabbit and Shark? You know how they let you in over that Lofosz business as well as these Vald'oro Mines."

"Really, Maria," said the Professor, "if you remember you counselled the Lofosz investment yourself."

But he was frightened at Coryton's words. All people who dabble in doubtful speculations are apt to be at the merest breath of suspicion.

"What do you advise then, Mr. Coryton?" he queried, addressing him with increased respect.

"I only wished to warn you as a friend," replied

Coryton with assumed reluctance. "To advise you further is another matter. Of course you know"—this to Mrs. de Courcy Miles—"Lord Southwark invests largely of his surplus income every month." The lady bowed assent. "I have therefore many opportunities of getting the 'straight tip' so to speak, which are debarred to the million; still I hardly know if I should be justified in——"

"Oh! do please advise James, dear Mr. Coryton," cried Mrs. de Courcy Miles, as he paused. "You don't know what a child he is in business matters. Yes, you are, James, there's no denying it. Do tell him of some nice safe investment with a good interest. Anything which Lord Southwark has money in must, I am sure, be first-class."

"Well, I don't know that I ought to do so," said Coryton, lowering his voice to suit the solemnity of the occasion. "Were it any one but you I should refuse; but I can refuse you nothing. . . . Well then," he went on in a lowered voice as though he were imparting a Cabinet secret, "a Company has just been formed—the shares are only just on the market—to promote one of the greatest inventions the world has ever seen. There is a great future before it—absolute security—and 20% dividend on the first half year. The 'Patent Automatic Drainage' Company it is called. For obvious reasons I do not care to explain the details just now, but it is a marvellously good investment. Lord Southwark thinks most highly of it."

"And is Lord Southwark one of the directors?" queried Mrs. Miles, her eyes brightening at the prospect of that 20% dividend.

"Lord Southwark does not see his way to becoming a director at present," replied Coryton with gentle rebuke. "He has to consider his position in the Ministry—but he is greatly interested." (In point of fact Lord Southwark had no more to do with it than the man in the moon.) "And in a small way, comparatively speaking, I am interested myself. But the Board of Directors is a very influential one. It includes the Marquis of Swindleycate, the Earl of Bubbelfraude,

Lord Guineapygge, Sir Hawke Pluckpigeon, K.C.B., Alderman Sir Levi Lazarus, Mr. Toadey-Snaile, M.P., and many other names well known in the world of finance."

"There, James," cried Mrs. de Courcy Miles, quite overcome by this illustrious list. "What better guarantees can you have? Please talk the matter over with Mr. Coryton. How providential you should have met him in this way. But"—her thoughts reverting to the original grievance—"I must say it is very inconsiderate of you to rush in upon us without notice in this way, we have so much going on too. Gwendolen dear, what are our engagements for this evening?"

During the whole of this colloquy Gwendolen and her lover had been engrossed with one another on the window-seat. Mrs. Miles found it necessary to repeat the question.

"Surely, Aunt, you know—we have not so many engagements," replied her uncomfortably truthful niece.

Mrs. Miles wisely ignored the rebuke and consulted her tablets.

"Ah! yes," she said, "it is as I thought. We are dining at Lady Giddy's and going on to Mrs. Connecticut's ball afterwards. You see, James, how inconsiderate you are. I have ordered no dinner. You'll get nothing here."

"Perhaps Professor Haviland will come and dine with me quite quietly at my club," suggested Coryton. "It would give me great pleasure if he would."

"That would be very nice," said Mrs. de Courcy Miles, accepting for the Professor promptly, "and then you might have a little business chat together."

Gwendolen gave Coryton a grateful glance. She was always grateful for any little kindness to her father. She was very fond of him and resented the way in which Mrs. Miles was apt to shunt him aside.

"Well, I must be going," said Coryton, taking up his hat. "We shall meet at eight then, Professor. So good of you to say you will come. Are you coming my way, Tyrconnel?"

"I think so," he replied, for he saw that as Coryton was leaving all chances of a further *tête-à-tête* were over. "We shall meet at Mrs. Connecticut's, Gwendolen. Oh! there is one thing I wanted to ask you—I had almost forgotten it. Will you and Mrs. Miles drive down with us to Hurlingham next Saturday and have lunch there? There is to be a Meet of the Four-in-Hand first of all, don't you know, and the idea was that we should drive down on Pimlico's coach."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Mrs. Miles with rapture. "We should love it of all things."

She had often been among the crowd which watches the Meets of the Coaching Club and Four-in-Hand from the footpaths. Now she was to be on a coach instead. Surely her ambitions were being realized at last. "Oh! how I hope the Overdone-Joneses will be there to see," she thought to herself.

But Gwendolen demurred.

"I do not like Lord Pimlico," she said, flushing a little. Poor Pimlico was the scapegoat just now, her suspicions having been diverted from Coryton. She in fact regarded him as Wilfrid's evil genius, *vice* Coryton promoted.

"What nonsense!" said Mrs. Miles, "I think Lord Pimlico a most charming person, his manners are the perfection of *haut ton*; as indeed they would be—the eldest son of the Marquis of Southwark. Really, Gwendolen, you are too ridiculous. I suppose there will be a large party, Mr. Tyrconnel?"

"No," said Coryton, answering for him. "Pimlico doesn't care about crowding his coach. I don't know how many exactly; but Lady Elizabeth and Miss Gargoyle, Lady Giddy and Miss Tresillian and two or three men are coming, I believe."

"There, do you hear, Gwendolen?" said Mrs. Miles. "Lady Elizabeth Gargoyle is going. Really, you are a little too absurd!"

"I thought Gwendolen would like to come," said Tyrconnel a little hurt, "but of course if she doesn't, we will say no more about it."

Gwendolen looked distressed. She heeded Mrs. de

Courcy Miles's railings no more than the flies upon the wall, but she did not wish to hurt Wilfrid's feelings, just when they were so happy together. Perhaps after all she was carrying her dislike of Lord Pimlico too far. She gave Tyrconnel her hand.

"I will come with pleasure if you wish it," she said.

The Professor dined that evening with Coryton as arranged. They had a nice little dinner and a really excellent bottle of port, to which the Professor, as befitted a University Don, did ample justice. Only Mr. Toadey-Snaile, that notorious Guinea-pig, dined with them before going down to the House. Coryton couldn't get any other members of the Syndicate together at so short a notice, but Mr. Snaile served excellently well. Before the evening was over the Professor had quite determined to invest his odd thousands in the Automatic Drainage Company—which Coryton was floating with a few titled decoys—and even to sell out other stock for the same purpose. Such an opportunity, as both Coryton and Mr. Snaile impressed upon him was not to be lost. The younger gentleman was comparatively new to the art of company-promoting, but he played his part to the manner born—so much so as to evoke the involuntary admiration of that old fox, Toadey-Snaile. No one knew how to pluck a pigeon better than Coryton, his early training admirably fitted him for the work and the Professor was the silliest of all pigeons—one who thinks himself wise. University dons, old women and country parsons, are notoriously the worst at business. It is upon them that bubble speculators, financial agents, company-promoters and such like vermin, fatten and flourish. Some one has said the world is made up of knaves and fools—mostly fools. This is perhaps an arbitrary division, the one thing certain is that there is a continual transference going on from the pockets of those who have money, to the pockets of those who have it not.

The starving man who steals a roll from a baker's shop is punished with the utmost rigor of the law, but

such as those who devour widows' houses and for pretence make long prayers, go scot free, and live and die in the odor of sanctity. The shadow of the Green Bay Tree is over them all.

A merry party drove down to Hurlingham the following Saturday. It was a beautiful sunshiny morning with just enough breeze to temper the heat. A little rain had fallen during the night, not much, but enough to freshen the trees in the Park and render the water-carts unnecessary. Pimlico kept his team of bays together in fine style, and handled the ribbons in masterful manner, evoking the noisy admiration of Theodora, who occupied the box seat and gave her opinion on the points of the horses in that delightfully candid and professional manner for which she was renowned. Mrs. de Courcey Miles had the audacity to manœuvre for the box-seat herself, but Theodora soon settled that. However, Mrs. Miles managed to make herself very much at home elsewhere, and even had the satisfaction of espying the Overdone-Joneses gaping at her from the path—just a little way below the Magazine. Miss Tresillian was unable to come; she was knocked up after last night's ball, she had written; but the real truth of the matter was that her dress did not come home in time—a ravishing creation of Kate Reilly's—and she had “nothing to wear.” However, she bore the disappointment very philosophically by taking it out in bed—with a French novel and a big box of bon-bons. Her “dear Poley” would console himself, no doubt.

A dainty little luncheon was awaiting them at the other end, a meal fit for Lucullus; though probably Lucullus, like most of those who make dining one of the fine arts, would have voted luncheon a mistake. When it was over, later in the afternoon the “all and sundry” as Theodora phrased it, began to troop in.

“It is always so fresh and delightful here,” said Lady Giddy to Coryton with a comprehensive wave of her parasol at the velvet turf and shady trees, “that I feel quite good. One's surroundings have a good deal to do with one's feeling good; don't you think?”

"Possibly," said Coryton, with a glance at the animated crowd, "though I confess Hurlingham never struck me in a pastoral light before. But then whatever our sins may be, we always flatter ourselves that we are conquering them—even when they are conquering us."

Lady Giddy laughed. "You are incorrigible," she said. "We will talk of something more interesting. Let us come and look at the Polo."

So they went and sat near the queer, mushroom-shaped little tents, and watched the game and listened to the music of the band. Coryton naturally translated "something more interesting" to mean Lady Giddy herself. So he chose the most subtle form of flattery and talked to her about herself. Lady Giddy was not backward in responding and they were soon embarked on the initial stages of a flirtation. However, they did not get very far ahead to-day, for the coaches began to move away early, as they generally do. Theodora was looking forward to the homeward drive and Pimlico was impatient to be gone. Gwendolen and Tyrconnel were hunted up with difficulty by Mrs. de Courcy Miles. They had turned their backs on the Polo, had gone off somewhere together in the grounds. But they were captured at last; and then the whole party drove homeward before the trees began to cast long shadows.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HENLEY REGATTA.

The virtue of widows is a laborious virtue : they have to combat constantly with the remembrance of past bliss.—ST. JEROME.

THE season was waning fast. Each year it seems to die harder and to take longer about it; but it was dying at last,—there could be no doubt about that. The trees in the Park were dusty and grimy; the flower-boxes in the windows of Belgravia and Mayfair had lost their

freshness, and it was too late for people to think of renewing them; the streets and squares were stuffy and hot. There was an air of finality about everything, people pined for a breath of fresh country air. Society generally was pluming itself for flight—discussing the possibilities of Goodwood and Cowes, where it would meet once more before dispersing itself to Homburg waters or Scottish moors.

The Eton and Harrow Match, the turning point of a dying season, was just over, and Lady Giddy had gone down to her place near Henley to entertain a party of friends for the Regatta. Not that Lady Giddy cared about the Regatta; she had been to so many and they were all alike; but it served as a peg to hang a house-party on.

Lady Giddy had a pretty little place on the river about a mile below Henley Bridge; a spacious house in good-sized grounds, the verdant lawns of which sloped down to the water's edge, beneath umbrageous trees. There was a tiny park and a charming boat-house. The house itself faced the river against a background of beech-trees, which were wont to don wondrous autumn tints of brown and red and gold.

People who did not know Lady Giddy very well often wondered why she did not marry again. People who knew her better did not wonder at all. Her late husband, an old Indian Judge and K. C. S. I. whom she had married for his money, became aware of the fact that she had done so, and, being of a jealous disposition, he willed his property in such a manner that everything would leave her if she married again.

So his young and handsome widow was left to perform an involuntary suttee. Her moneyed admirers did not admire her enough to marry her for her own sake, and the impecunious ones were out of the question. Love in a cottage would not suit Lady Giddy.

She had a good many *amourettes*, but she was on the whole discreet. She might possibly sin against every commandment in the decalogue,—and probably did against one of them,—but she was careful always to observe the greatest commandment of all “Thou

shalt not be found out." Wives and mothers were inclined to be nasty now and then, but Lady Giddy held her own, and the world generally, and her world in particular, for the most part winked at her little affairs of the heart, and said "It was only that dear Lady Giddy's way."

Lady Giddy did not include Gwendolen in her house party, though Mrs. de Courcy Miles threw out some very strong hints indeed.

"After quartering herself and that girl upon us for the May-week last year, I call it most unfriendly," she said, forgetting that it was she who had worried Lady Giddy into staying with her. But Mrs. Miles was more than consoled by an invitation from Lord Baltinglass of Blarney, who, at Wilfrid's instigation, had taken a house at Wargrave for the Henley week.

Lady Giddy arranged a nice little party "mixed and piquant" as they say of pickles. She invited Lady Elizabeth and Theodora, Lord Pimlico, Gaverigan, Colonel Lockhart, Miss Connecticut and Miss Mudlark, Sir Lauder Forbes, Lady Greyheather, and Miss Miller, Williams and Wilmot, and last but not least Violet Tresillian and Coryton. Lady Giddy was very proud of Violet in a way. She had done her much credit, for she was universally admitted to be one of the prettiest girls of last season.

Violet's wit, her beauty, heightened by her admirable taste in dress and her vague reputation of being an heiress had made her a centre of attraction. It was remarkable under the circumstances that she kept her faith with Coryton. She was just that sort of girl who might make a brilliant match in time; but somehow no very eligible *parti* came in her way throughout the season, at least not in the way of business—men often admire most the women they would care to marry least—and Coryton exercised an attraction,—it might almost be called a fascination—over her, and besides she was completely deceived as to his real financial position.

Coryton accepted Lady Giddy's invitation gladly, though he could only spare a few days. Parliament was still sitting, but Lord Southwark had not much

for him to do just now. By and bye would come that rush of bills which are always hustled up to the Upper House at the fag end of the Session. In the meantime the Lords were waiting for work while the Commons were wrangling. So Lord Southwark went off to his place in Loamshire for a day or two, and his private secretary ran down to Henley.

Without being head over ears in love with Violet, Coryton liked to be with her, and was anxious to urge his suit. He knew how volatile she was and feared that she might throw him over if some one, whom she considered a better match, presented himself. That would upset his calculations considerably, for was not Violet's dowry to pay his bills, his Election expenses and many other little luxuries? Therefore he was anxious to settle the matter without delay. Some awkward questions might turn up over the settlements, perhaps, but he thought he knew a way of evading them so far as he was concerned. He was quite ready to settle anything on Violet—on paper. When it came to paying over the money, Violet would be tied to him irrevocably.

"And she will be shrewd enough to accept the inevitable," he thought. "The real bond of wedlock is self-interest. Passion dies, love passes, but that remains. It is the motive power of most marriages, it is the secret of the endurance of them all."

Lady Giddy having arranged her little party, prepared to enjoy herself.

"You will have a good many boys among your guests," remarked Lady Elizabeth discontentedly to Lady Giddy, the afternoon of her arrival.

She and Theodora had come down by an early train. The others were not expected until just before dinner. Tea was over and Theodora had gone off—to have a "look in," as she phrased it—at the stables. The two were sitting under the great elm-trees on the lawn. Her hostess had been running off her list for the benefit of Lady Elizabeth.

"I love boys," gushed Lady Giddy, a somewhat unnecessary statement, her listener thought. "They take one so seriously, and do you know?—it is quite a

pleasure to be taken seriously sometimes. It almost makes one believe in oneself."

"Which self?" asked Lady Elizabeth. "We all of us have three selves, the one we think we are, the one other people think we are, and the one we really are. Which self?"

"Oh, I don't know!" rejoined Lady Giddy indifferently, looking beyond her at the broad, flowing river, "the one people think we are, I suppose. It is refreshing to be believed in now and then, anyway."

Lady Elizabeth laughed amusedly.

"My good Gerty," she exclaimed. "You are getting quite sentimental. But tell me how comes it that the Baltinglasses are not included in your list? I thought you were such great friends."

"They have taken a house at Wargrave, a mile or so from here, or I should certainly have asked Wilfrid."

"Another boy!" said Lady Elizabeth. "He is a great friend of that new man one meets everywhere, Southwark's secretary, isn't he? They always seem to run in couples. Tell me, do you know anything about the girl Wilfrid is marrying. I saw her one day at Hurlingham—and I believe—I don't remember—she was at Blarney. She struck me as quite pretty. Who is she?"

"Oh, nobody," rejoined Lady Giddy. "Quite a middle-class person, I assure you, the daughter of a Cambridge tutor or professor or something of the kind. Yes, she is pretty in a way, but utterly *gauche* and with no pretension to smartness."

"But you went to stay with the middle-class person at Cambridge last year, didn't you?" asked Lady Elizabeth, a trifle maliciously.

"Yes," said Lady Giddy composedly, "I was pestered into it. I know the girl's aunt a little, a terrible woman"—so do we speak of our dear friends—"whom I met in India long ago. We were at Simla one year together, and at Simla one gets to know all sorts of queer creatures, you know."

"Yes," said Lady Elizabeth, "quite so." She had heard a little of Lady Giddy's Simla experiences from

another quarter. "Ah, here comes Theodora—Well, Theo, what do you think of the stables?"

"Rippin'," ejaculated Theodora. She was in the habit of clipping her g's; and her English—to put it mildly—was somewhat loose. "That's a gay little cob you've got, Gerty. I like him better than that fiddle-headed chestnut you rode last season."

"Yes," said Lady Giddy, falling into the same vernacular, "the chestnut was a bit nappy on the road, but fit as a flea when it came to going across country. I'm glad you like the cob, Theo, he's a gay little beast."

"I should like a mount on him to-morrow mornin', then I could tell better what he's made of, don't you know," said Theodora, decapitating a daisy with her stick.

"I don't see how you'll manage it," rejoined her hostess, "unless you turn out before breakfast. We'll have to go to the Regatta some time before luncheon."

"All right," said Theodora, "I'm game. I'll see if I can't rout up Pim and we'll go for a spin together. It'll do him good; he's been gettin' very slack lately and puttin' on weight in a manner that is quite alarmin'."

Pimlico, however (to whom she confided the idea later on in the evening), didn't seem to see it, and so the ride was postponed for another day.

The next morning they all drove over in a big brake to the Regatta—all, that is to say, except a few of the more enthusiastic spirits, who preferred to go by the river. But Lady Giddy and the bulk of her party liked to take their pleasures easily. So they drove over to Phyllis Court not too early in the forenoon, and lunched comfortably under some spreading trees in the grounds, and then joined the privileged few who witnessed the Regatta from Phyllis Court lawn, which slopes down to the river's edge and commands an unrivalled view of the scene of action. If any wished to go on the river it was easy to get a boat from there.

It is needless to enter upon a detailed description of the Regatta. It may be taken for granted that every one has seen it. And this particular Regatta

was just the same as all the rest. There were races going on presumably, though most of the people did not seem to know much about them; there was the huge flotilla of boats of every imaginable sort and shape, from the flower-bedecked house-boat to the Canadian canoe. There were nigger minstrels and comic singers, there was the gay animated crowd on the river and on the banks. Except that there was plenty of sunshine, and no rain—and it generally does rain for Henley—there was nothing to mark out this Regatta from those which had preceded it.

When Lady Giddy had disposed of her guests—or rather when they had disposed of themselves, as people have a knack of doing on these occasions—she looked around for Coryton, but learned that he had gone off on the river with Violet. A faint sense of disappointment came over her. He amused her, and she had quite looked forward to a little flirtation with him.

She crossed the meadow with the intention of giving some directions to her servants, who were packing up the luncheon baskets, when suddenly she came upon some one with his hands clasped behind his head, reclining at full length under a chestnut tree. A cigarette was between his lips, and he was lazily watching the rings of blue smoke curl upwards in the summer air. In the distance Lady Giddy could see nothing but what seemed to her a heap of white flannels, with a straw hat alongside, but as she came nearer the heap resolved itself into shape, and she saw that it was Gaverigan.

"Upon my word," she exclaimed, in a tone of laughing remonstrance, "this is really too bad of you, Harold. Quite apart from the ill compliment you pay me, what is the good of coming to the Regatta if you ostentatiously turn your back upon it?"

He sprang to his feet at the sound of her voice, and faced her with a smile.

"The Regatta!" he echoed, "I did not come to see the Regatta—that Cockney Carnival, that Paradise of Bohemia—but to see you," he added audaciously.

"You have a queer way of letting me know it," she rejoined coquettishly, "going apart by yourself in this manner—Well, I will not interrupt your meditations."

He laid a detaining hand on her arm, and looked pleadingly into her eyes.

"Do not be angry with me," he said contritely, "and do not go. Stay here with me. Surely it is better here than in yonder crowd."

Lady Giddy thought so too. He was a handsome boy, quite as amusing as Coryton, she thought resentfully, though in a different way and very much more in earnest. So they sat down and chatted on under the shady trees the whole of the afternoon, while the band in the Isthmian enclosure played its melodies, mellowed to them by the distance, and the crowd on the river seemed very far off. . . .

"Gerty! Gerty!" cried a well-known voice at last. "Ah, here you are, I have been looking for you everywhere."

And Lady Elizabeth bore down upon them, a little flushed with walking and considerably out of temper.

"Nearly every one is going into the house for tea," she exclaimed in an injured tone. "Are you coming? I don't like to go by myself, I don't know the people."

"Dear me," apologized Lady Giddy, "I had no idea it was so late, and I thought you were with Lord Pimlico looking at the races."

"He's gone off with Theo somewhere. They've been away together all the afternoon. As for the races," continued Lady Elizabeth discontentedly, as they walked towards the house, "I saw nothing of them. I'm too old to care about such things, and there are really very few people here one knows. I only saw the terrible Sir Cincinnatus—just in time, fortunately, to avoid him. If it hadn't been for some queer actress creatures in a gaudy house-boat and those delightful nigger minstrels, I should have been bored to death. There was really no one to talk to," she

grumbled, determined to make her hostess feel the full enormity of her delinquencies.

Meanwhile Coryton and Violet had paddled over to Lord Muskery's launch in a Canadian canoe; or rather Violet had done the paddling, while he lay among the cushions and looked at her admiringly. She appealed to his sense of fitness; there was a vitality, a capability about her every movement.

Violet showed to advantage on the river. She was not one of the women who dress overmuch for Henley, but there was an exquisite freshness and neatness about her well-fitting white serge, her brown leather boots and the little hat with the dark blue ribbon perched so coquettishly on her dainty curls, which put to shame the more elaborate toilets around her.

They fell to talking in a desultory way about the subject which interested them most, namely, themselves. What would have struck a listener most was the absence of sentiment on both sides. There were no "pawings and maulings," no eloquent looks, no half-murmured words. They might have been arranging their dinner instead of the great event of their lives.

Nothing could be more admirable than their plans, if only one fatal flaw had not run through them all. Neither of them was frank with the other. Coryton had urged in the most convincing way the futility of a long engagement—the thought of his unpaid bills had added a touch of eloquence to his pleading—and Violet was a little tired of an unsettled life, and of staying about with people whose only thought was to get her settled.

So they agreed to be married in the autumn.

Violet deftly piloted the canoe through the crowd of boats, until they came alongside Lord Baltinglass's launch—a luxurious craft with a gaily striped awning and heaps of cushions and flowers. Tea was going on when they boarded her, and there were a good many people sitting about, but the two whom they had come especially to see, Wilfrid and Gwendolen, were not there.

"They disappeared just after luncheon, and we have

not seen them since," explained Mrs. de Courcy Miles, who wore a gorgeous costume, which she fondly imagined was just suited for the river, and which she had donned with a view of subjugating Lord Baltinglass of Blarney.

"We'll wait a little, they'll probably turn up for some tea presently," said Coryton.

"I don't know," ejaculated Miss Tyrconnel with a pensive shake of her ringlets. "They have most likely forgotten all about it. Ah me! How sweet is Love's young dream! You can sympathize with them, can't you dear?" And she looked towards Violet.

"I confess I can't," rejoined that young lady. "I don't understand that sort of thing myself. Give me one of those little cakes, Poley."

Miss Tyrconnel was right. Those of whom they were speaking had no more thought of tea than of the deluge. They were finding their all in one another.

Tyrconnel had sculled up the stream, and when they had got beyond sight of the shouting crowd he had moored the boat alongside the bank. Here, beneath the shade of a great alder-tree, whose branches swung their creamy blossoms low above heads, they whiled away the hours, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

They were both very much in love, though in a different way. Tyrconnel worshipped Gwendolen with all the passion of an emotional, impressionable nature. Passion seemed hardly the word to apply to Gwendolen. She was as pure as snow, and as cold. Yet the love she felt for him softened her nature somewhat, for she loved him with all the first freshness of a woman who loves once and can never love again. But though it softened her, it did not change her. She strove to raise him to her pedestal, but she did not come down one step to meet him.

There are some women who love the part of counsellor and adviser. Gwendolen was one of these. She spoke to him eloquently of the iniquity of yielding to

temptation,—she who had never known what it was to be tempted! She spoke to him of the sufferings of others,—she who had never known what it was to suffer! She was burning with a desire to set the world right,—she who had no more idea of the world than an unborn babe!

But however unselfish one may be, however rigid in one's spotless purity—when one is young and when one loves, one is apt now and then to let other considerations slide, and to find the joy of loving enough.

Gwendolen felt this to a certain extent to-day as she talked with her lover under the blossoming alder boughs, and looked at the scudding ripples on the river's breast. Not that they talked much, for when one loves most, one says least. Yet ever and anon their thoughts found vent in words, as now—when she was telling him how she meant to help him in the new life which lay before them. There was a glow of enthusiasm lighting up her face, he seemed to catch the reflex of it.

"Dear one," he said presently. "Do you never think of yourself?"

"If one lives for oneself, one lives for but a little thing," she answered. "I live for you, Wilfrid. You are my other self."

"And you are my nobler one," he vowed, bending nearer to her. Then a shadow fell over his face. "Sometimes," he said, "it seems to me that our happiness is too bright to last. Will you love me always?"

"Always, always," she repeated, looking at him out of the steady depths of her calm, beautiful eyes.

Foolish vow, which lovers always use. What does it mean but that two beings, essentially changeable, pledge themselves never to change?

"Can you doubt me, Wilfrid?"

"No," he said, "never that—I only doubt my worthiness Swear to me, Gwen, that nothing shall part us—nothing—past, present, or to come."

She looked at him, a little startled by his earnestness. It was one of his moods, she thought; it would pass.

"Have I not told you I will love you always," she

said softly. "What can part us? The past is over and gone. You have told me all." He shrank a little at this, but she did not notice it. "The future lies with God. Surely the present is enough. We have no secrets from each other, you and I. Let us then be happy in the perfect confidence which love brings."

"The perfect confidence which love brings," he repeated; "and love is merciful and forgiving, is it not?"

He paused for a moment and bowed his head. A struggle was going on within him. He had not told her all. The memory of a half-forgotten sin rose before him. . . . And she trusted him. . . . He shrank from polluting her pure ears by even hinting at what was past. But she trusted him. . . . And then he knew not how she would take it. What some would consider a mere boyish indiscretion might seem to Gwendolen a mortal sin. No, he could not run the risk of losing her. . . . But she trusted him. . . .

"Gwen," he said hoarsely, "what if I were to tell you something more,—something—"

What he meant to say was never uttered. At that moment a shout of noisy laughter, the splashing of oars broke upon their ears and a boat passed by them. There were four people in it—of the Cockney Bohemian type. Two men were rowing, a girl was steering, and another girl was lying down in the bows. They were all in boisterously high spirits, the girl in the bows had a banjo, and a gaudy Japanese umbrella.

"Look out, Sally," cried one of the men, "take care where you are going to, or we shall be into that boat in a jiff."

Tyrconnel looked up to ward off the threatened danger and, as he did so, his eyes met full those of the girl steering. A shock of surprise and disgust ran through him, the words he had been forming died away upon his lips. He felt like one who is suddenly confronted with the ghost of an unforgiven sin. Here was the sin incarnate in the form of Sally Popkins.

Sally was also taken aback for the moment, with surprise probably. But she recovered an instant later, and leaned forward with a sort of half smile of recog-

nition. But seeing that Tyrconnel responded not, the bow was strangled in its birth and her smile changed to a melancholy reproachful gaze. She pulled the wrong rope—there came a volley of remonstrance—more laughter, and the boat swept on.

But Gwendolen had caught that look too.

“Who is that person who looked at you so strangely, Wilfrid?” she asked with a puzzled air, “such an extraordinary looking creature! Have you seen her before?”

“I—I—don’t know,” stammered Tyrconnel confusedly—“I believe so. Don’t you think it is time we were getting back, Gwen?—What a nuisance, I have let my scull fall into the water.”

In the excitement of fishing it out again, Gwendolen forgot, for a time, the look she had noticed on the girl’s face

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GRAFTING OF THE GREEN BAY TREE.

We mutually pledge to each other our lives our fortunes and our sacred honor.—THOMAS JEFFERSON.

THE Coryton-Tresillian wedding was pronounced by the society papers to be one of the events of the autumn. That is to say, there were a great many well-dressed people at St. Peter’s, Eaton Square, with favors and flowers galore. The bride’s dress—like most bride’s dresses—was of ivory duchesse satin, trimmed with Alençon lace and there were the usual sprigs of aphrodisiac orange-blossom, inappropriate emblem of innocence. There were eight white bridesmaids with Charles the First hats and long white feathers that waggled all down their backs; there were two little page-boys, nephews of Sir Edward Tresillian, who held up the bride’s train and looked quite pictur-

esque with their golden love-locks and cavalier costumes of white velvet.

After the ceremony, everybody trooped off to the Lockharts' house in Grosvenor Place, kindly lent for the occasion, and suggestive comments were interchanged, hollow congratulations offered. The wedding presents were displayed on long tables all round the drawing-room and suggested a charity bazaar, especially by their tawdriness and vulgarity. Lord Southwark had sent a half-guinea nickel ink-pot, which Violet mentally destined for the servants' hall, when she got one. Seventeen people of wealth and good position had sent silver muffineers, which afterwards only fetched two and three-pence each as old silver. An obscure painter-man had taken this opportunity of exhibiting one of his daubs to a larger audience than he had ever secured before, and an obscure novelist had taken the same opportunity of advertising his three-volume shocker. Miss Tyrconnel's present of half a dozen Nainsook night-caps was hidden away under the plethoric family Bible with which she accompanied them. Pimlico's roulette board was carefully wrapped up in its cloth. Coryton and Violet were supposed to be rising stars and their most ephemeral acquaintances took the opportunity of proving their regard without overtaking their pockets. Violet had remarked, as each fresh present arrived, that such meanness defeated itself, for the object of a wedding present was to give pleasure and exact remembrance, while these trumpery offerings did neither.

Violet had gone through the trying ordeal very well, contriving to combine a certain affectation of demureness and a pathetic by-play of her big round eyes with an airy cheerfulness as rare in a bride as it is delightful. The women congratulated her ironically on her pluck and went off to whisper in each other's long ears that it was "most unmaidenly." The men were inclined to think Coryton had got "rather a handful," but all agreed she was "a deuced pretty girl." A knot of young men began discussing the question how long she would take to get tired of

him and how she would treat her admirers in another six months.

"They are neither of them the sort of people one would care to marry," said Gaverigan airily. "They are fairly good company so long as one does not see too much of them. A week alone with either would bore me off my head—to say nothing of a lifetime! People who want to get on in life always bore me. They are so cursed commonplace."

"They are very cynical," said Toadey-Snaile, who disliked Gaverigan, "and there is nothing so commonplace as that nowadays."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Williams. "The girl's as fresh and original as they make them. I've heard her startle the stupidest people with the things she says——"

"Yes, I know she often startles you," sneered Wilmot, with the privileged rudeness of intimacy.

"Be quiet. I only mean she says astounding things to the most correct people and yet every man, woman, and child is devoted to her. I call that a proof of cleverness, if you like."

"How sick she'll get of Mr. Coryton before the honeymoon's over," put in Theodora, who always joined in the confabulations of young men. "I do hate young men who always let you see they are thinking about their prospects."

"'M yes. Other people's prospects don't interest one, do they?" said Gaverigan.

"That depends on who they are."

"Pim, for instance?"

"You cheeky chap! No, I only meant that it offends me to have 'comin' men' give themselves all those airs before they've come, don't you know? Big bosses don't put on all that side. It's all very well to say he's clever. I don't call it clever to have that manner."

"Oh! well. I don't know. People generally take one at one's own valuation. Don't you think so, Corry?" Gaverigan went on, as the bridegroom joined the group.

"Or at that of what the lawyers call one's 'next

friend,' who knows more than all one's weak points and—like the 'damned good-natured fellow' he is—takes a pleasure in proclaiming them."

"But surely frankness is one of the highest privileges of intimacy."

"Frankness! What is that?" he replied, turning on his heel. "Frankness consists in telling plausible untruths to your face, and outrageous ones behind your back, doesn't it?"

"Bridegroom seems fresh, don't he?" said Pimlico, in his sporting lingo. "Vixie'll have to ride him with the snaffle and put the blinkers on him."

At last Violet got a chance of saying a few words privately to her husband.

"For Heaven's sake let's get this over as soon as we can," she whispered. "I've thanked two hundred and ninety-three people for their congratulations and a hundred and seventy-five for their presents, without making a single mistake. Nineteen old men have said, 'God bless you!' to me, and at least as many old women have made the most embarrassing allusions."—She blushed in the daintiest way as she said this.—"And really I can't stand it much longer."

"There's only half an hour more, thank goodness!" returned Coryton, his dark face lighting up with a sunny smile. "I am afraid I have been quite rude to some of these precious sight-seers. Modern marriage is really a most disagreeable process. If we ever have to go through it again, we'll go straight from the church to the station, won't we?"

Violet laughed. "To judge from our impatience, anybody'd think we were madly in love with each other,—the sort of young fools who go in for 'love in a cottage,' don't you know?"

"Instead of a honeymoon at Monte Carlo, followed by love in a little box in Mayfair, eh?" he returned. "Well, even if I weren't yearning for heaven with you, I should be sick of this purgatory by this time."

"Come, you're getting on. Compliments from Poley are compliments indeed, aren't they, Miss Gargoyle?"

"Don't know. Never tried 'em," returned that young woman in her downright way. "S'pose you're

off soon. Anyhow I am. This kind of show sickens me. No offence, mind. I hope you'll have a real good time. Must say I envy you Monte just now,—it's rip-pin' there before the rabble sets in. You and I must be good pals all the same.—I don't mind lettin' you into a secret"—and she took Violet aside mysteriously and talked to her in a loud stage whisper—"Pim and I are going to follow suit in the spring. Ain't it horrid? I flush all over every time I think of it."

"You'll soon get used to it," laughed Violet, not knowing what to make of all this unusual amiability. "Well, if you really must be going, good-bye. Thanks awfully for coming to see me.—I daresay we shall see you down south later on."

The guests were thinning a little and it was almost time to prepare for departure. Violet heaved a great sigh of relief. She was not quite sure she had done wisely in marrying this man, and a haunting dread of the future possessed her. She liked him and believed he was bound to get on. But that was very different from the love which hopeth all things, endureth all things,—even poverty in a cottage. She laughed softly to herself. Poverty! No, that was not a thing she could endure with any one. Phew! Was she so very coeksure that there would be plenty to live on? The settlements had been very carelessly gone into and, when she came to think of it, the £1,000 a year that had been settled on her had only been settled on paper and, for all she knew, her husband might not have a thousand pence to bless himself with. Her solicitors had not advised minute inquiries, as the object of their diplomacy was to conceal by vague promises and ambiguous phrases the nakedness of the land, and it was feared, as Mr. Soapsuds, the senior partner, phrased it, that "inquiries might breed inquiries."

However, she was not a person to anticipate evil. So long as things were going well for the moment, she was quite content to let the future take care of itself. Poley was a dear boy and the beginning of one's first honeymoon is always an inspiring period even for the most *blasé*. She determined none the less to take an early opportunity of learning the exact

state of affairs from her husband and putting an end to this suspense. Her reflections were cut short by the appearance of Wilfrid Tyrconnel with outstretched hand and beaming face.

"At last I have an opportunity of giving you all my good wishes!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "I have been looking for an opportunity all the afternoon, but you were always busy with some old fossil or other. And now you are just off and you will never be the same Vixie again."

"Bless me! Have you got such a volume of good wishes for me as all that? Very well, fire ahead. I can still give you ten minutes."

"Don't joke, Vixie. I am quite sad about it. Believe me," he stammered, "I do hope you'll be very, very happy. I used to think at one time I might perhaps have had some share in making you happy. But somehow we seem to have drifted apart. Corry's a good chap and all that, but somehow I never thought that he—that you——"

"Were likely to fall head over ears in love with anybody, least of all with each other," she said rather bitterly, helping him through in his confusion.

"Well, he has not your fine feelings. I never thought you were cut out for each other exactly. But as you have chosen him, I suppose you do love him and I hope and pray that he may make you happy—may be worthy of you."

"Pray!" she murmured, half to herself, with a shade of displeasure in her tones. Why did this youth come and put doubts into her head just as she was making an effort to put them out?

"Yes, *pray*," he returned earnestly. "You know I never set up to be a religious chap."—Violet smiled, as the thought of Gwendolen flitted through her mind.—"But I believe that sometimes prayers are heard and I, who have a very deep regard for you, do pray earnestly that all possible happiness may be yours."

He seemed deeply moved and Violet's quick sympathies were touched at once.

"You are a kind boy, Pidge," she said gently, taking his hand, "and I am sure I can always count on

you as a friend, even though others may come between us."

A blush rose to his cheek.

"No one shall prevent my being your friend, *always*," he said simply.

"Gwendolen doesn't like me——" she began.

"You and she have never got on very well, because you are so different," he interrupted. "But you wrong her in saying she does not like you. She does not understand you as I do, but she is always eager to think the best of every one. We shall always desire your welfare. You know," he added confusedly, "that we are going to be married almost immediately!"

"I have long expected it. I shall certainly—'pray' for you! Miss Haviland deserves all congratulations. Look here, Pidge, aren't you rather a queer fellow, coming here to declare your eternal devotion to me, just when I'm married to another man and you're engaged to another girl? All right, old boy," she added almost affectionately, "we'll swear eternal friendship, won't we? I only hope you may be as happy as we are going to be. Eh, Poley?" she added, as her husband came to claim her.

What a relief when at last they were clear of the nagging crowd and were driving off to the station with tell-tale grains of rice in the folds of their clothes and an old shoe lingering among the rugs. For the first time there was a feeling of constraint between them and neither spoke for some time. At last Violet, whom a silence always bored, put on a little sentimental pout and said,

"Are you quite sure you don't regret the step we're taking, Poley?"

"Oh! yes," he said without enthusiasm. "We thought it well out beforehand and it's going to lead to a big boom,—all the bigger perhaps because we are hampered by no childish illusions about love."

Violet screwed up her face with a dissatisfied air.

"If you say so," she returned, "I suppose it must be so. But I don't see the necessity of repeating it so often. If you don't love me, you might at least

have the politeness to pretend to on our wedding-day."

There was enough resentment in Violet's tones to arrest Coryton's attention, but it never struck him that it could be anything more than pique. He was in a nervous irritable mood, chiefly from a haunting doubt that perhaps this marriage was a rash speculation, as well as from extreme anxiety to know what they would have to live upon. He was meditating how he should ask her, but even his cynical nature shrank from such a step at this stage of the honeymoon. Besides, his policy of always seeking to please and keep everybody in perpetual good-humor had become so much a habit with him that it was almost a second nature. So he took his cue from her mood at once and patted her little gloved hand with some show of tenderness, saying,

"I believe we love each other as far as we are capable of such an emotion, either of us. At any rate we have what is much more important for a happy marriage, and that is, the same interests and the same character."

Violet smiled rather sadly.

"I am foolish enough to care a great deal more for you than you do for me," she said, "and I know that any unhappiness the marriage may bring forth will fall upon my shoulders. Some people say it is always the woman that suffers most. I don't believe that. It is the one who feels most deeply."

"It is a mistake to feel deeply about anything," he said lightly, "and I don't believe we either of us really do. Least of all should we feel deeply during that mad carnival, known as the honeymoon. A well-arranged life is one continuous honeymoon and a well-arranged honeymoon has nothing of real life about it except its continuity."

"Those are good rules for fair weather. But there must be love to take one through a storm. If we were poor, for instance"—she scrutinized his face anxiously, as she said this, but learned nothing,—“if we were poor we couldn't rub along on those terms."

"Or on any others, for the matter of that," he re-

turned. "I don't agree with you that love would help to make poverty tolerable. One would feel so much more acutely the privations undergone by somebody one loved better than oneself,—if you can conceive the existence of such a person," he added, with his sneering smile.

"You rascal, of course I can," she answered reproachfully, "and I believe the pleasure of smoothing away those privations for him would more than counterbalance the pain of enduring them—or even of witnessing them."

"Come now, Vixie. Such a sentiment from you is too outrageous. You really might give up trying to astonish me now. I believe you only say things just too see how wide you can make people open their eyes."

"Well, that *is* an amusement, as you know yourself. But I am serious this time. I believe—quite apart from sentiment or any such rot—that love is a most useful commodity in marriage,—if you can get it."

"I daresay. But you can't. There isn't such a thing, at least not after the first month is over and the gilt has been rubbed off the gingerbread."

"At any rate love is the only thing that can make poverty endurable."

"I don't agree at all. Love is excess of sentiment. If poverty could ever be made endurable, it would be by the utter absence of sentiment. I have always tried to educate myself not to care a twopenny dam what happens. That is the true philosophy. If you have that and an unshakable belief in yourself, nothing can disconcert you. Poverty will only be a temporary inconvenience, hardship a means to an end, and economy a policy."

"What a subject for a honeymoon! I am sure I hope we may never have to put our theories to the proof. As for me, I have no patience with poor people. It is always people's own fault if they are poor. If you play your cards well, you can always get credit for your luxuries and then the necessities can take care of themselves. And the people I have least patience with are those who are forever parading their poverty. I consider that much more vulgar than parading riches,

as Lord Baltinglass and people of his kidney do. However poor I was, I should have too much self-respect to parade my poverty."

"Of course, no wise person parades poverty, unless he is very rich, any more than a true gentleman ever makes a parade of riches unless he is as poor as a rat. Then he has to."

By this time they had reached the station and they found they had some minutes to wait before the train, which was to take them as far as Dover. Sir Edward Tresillian's confidential valet had made all the arrangements for comfort and privacy, which a honeymoon is supposed to require. A private compartment had been taken, and the usual necessities of travel provided: a hamper from Benoit's, all the evening papers and a selection of two-shilling novels.

Couples on their honeymoons are supposed not to want companionship. At any rate they feel they must conform to custom so far as to travel by themselves. People always look at the newly-married in a horribly embarrassing way and modesty, as well as custom, requires a retreat. But when the retreat has been found and the guard has tipped his last wink and the engine has given its first outward puff, food and literature are invaluable resources.

"How thoughtful of Cribble to get us all those yellow-backs," Violet exclaimed, as soon as they were installed. "I really could not have stood another half hour of your epigrams."

"Well, there's Gaverigan coming along with luggage and hampers and an air of infinite content on his face. Would you like him in our carriage to relieve you of the tedium of my society all the way to Dover?"

Nothing that any one could say ever ruffled Coryton's imperturbable good-humor.

"Oh! yes, do," Violet exclaimed, clapping her hands delightedly. And then, seeing a comical look of distress on her husband's face, she added, "Not that I don't like being with you, Poley, old boy, but we shall see such a lot of each other presently that an hour or two now won't make any difference."

"Don't distress yourself, Vixie," he said, as he beckoned Gaverigan. "I'm not so thin-skinned as all that."

Gaverigan was on his way to Monte Carlo and was at once subjected to a good deal of chaff about his discretion in concealing his intention at the wedding. He vowed that he never made up his mind to go there until the last moment and always kept the whole thing a profound secret. In this case he had been especially deterred from a confession by his desire not to intrude upon the happy pair, when they would most of all wish to be left alone.

The happy pair, however, protested that that was what they least of all wished.

"You can't think how shy we are, Mr. Gaverigan," Violet exclaimed. "Do come and be chaperone."

Gaverigan, however, required a great deal of persuasion, but was at last sufficiently tickled by the novelty of the proposal to make him give way. They had a very merry journey down, the hampers occupying them most of the way and a game of stud-poker keeping them amused for the rest.

"Well, I'm sure this is the most original journey I ever heard of," Gaverigan exclaimed more than once. "I can only think of one detail that could possibly have made it more original and that would have been for Coryton to travel in the public car and for you and me to go alone in the honeymoon compartment, eh, Vixie?"

"I wish we'd thought of that," she laughed, "and so does Poley. He's tired of me already."

Coryton certainly looked as if the whole business bored him. He was feeling uneasy about the future,—an unusual thing with him,—and his nervousness seemed to communicate itself to his wife. Her last remark was uttered with a good deal of feeling, which the bantering tone she had assumed did not entirely cloak. Coryton, who had quick perceptions, noticed it at once and watched her curiously for some moments.

Then he turned to Gaverigan with a ludicrous shrug and said,

"You see, we're so confoundedly shy about all this business that we have to make a parade of indifference before other people, but when we are alone, we're just as much spoons as any other honeymooners, aren't we, Vixie?"

"This is the most agreeable journey I've ever known," exclaimed Gaverigan, interrupting him,—
"and the journey from London to Monte Carlo always is very agreeable,—at any rate to an expert traveller."

"Like yourself," Violet put in.

Gaverigan made a deep bow.

"I say," he went on, "it would be jolly if you people would consent to come straight on, instead of stopping at Dover. It would be so delightfully unconventional and we'd be as happy as sandboys. The journey is infinitely pleasanter if you do it without stopping. You'll have plenty of time to register your luggage again at Dover and send a wire to the Lord Warden. I've secured a cabin for the boat, which is very much at your service."

"I hate travelling at night," said Violet hastily.
"Besides, there are limits even to unconventionality."

She turned appealingly to her husband, who was watching her with a comical expression.

"Certainly, my dear, very distinct limits," he replied.
"In fact, I always say that people only seek to attract attention by being unconventional when they can't do it in any other way. There's one for you, old boy," he added, getting up, as the train rattled into Dover-Town station, and slapping Gaverigan on the shoulder.

"But we shall meet out there very soon, Mr. Gaverigan," Violet added, her face brightening up with pleasure at the prospect of arrival. "We shall spend a fortnight or so in Paris and then go on south by easy stages. I am counting on you to initiate me into all the mysteries of roulette. I suppose everybody will be there,—Lady Giddy and the Pigeon and the rest. I mean to have a regular good time."

Gaverigan bade her good-bye with more effusion than that *nil admirari* youth usually thought it incumbent on himself to display. Violet's character interested him, and he had often contemplated the possi-

bility of making love to her. As to the wisdom of her wedding with Coryton, he had been in considerable doubt all along.

"Poor little girl," he murmured thoughtfully, as the train went on towards the pier. "I'm afraid she'll have rather a rough time of it with that great, cold, unemotional fathead, Coryton. I shouldn't think anything would move him, either tears, or appeals, or death itself. So long as everything goes smoothly he'll be smooth and fair, and even charming in his way. But directly anything goes wrong, there'll be the very devil. They are both clever and, with a fair amount of luck, there is no reason why they shouldn't make a boom of life. But they can't either of them have much money behind them and, without that, it's always an up-hill game. . . . She is much fonder of him than he is of her. But that'll wear off. It's always so to begin with. . . . I suppose they'll drift into being knights of industry one way or another. But I hope not. She's much too nice for that sort of thing. . . . I should like to meet her again when she's lost her illusions,—if she has ever had any. . . .! Here, Porter, take all these things on board the Calais boat."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LORD WARDEN.

Philosophy triumphs easily over past and future evils, but present evils triumph over philosophy.—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

A cosy sitting-room with a fire and a tempting dinner awaited the Corytons at the Lord Warden hotel, but not much appetite remained to either of them after the anxieties of the day and the convivial journey down. Violet heaved a deep sigh of content as she flung off her wraps and drew up an arm-chair to the fire. She looked very picturesque with the glow of the flames

lighting up her face and there was a look of happiness upon it which few had ever been privileged to see there.

"Dear, dear Poley!" she exclaimed with some feeling, as soon as they were alone, "I really believe I must be in love with you. I feel in such an ecstatic condition, as if some good fairy had suddenly granted me all my desires and I had nothing left to wish for. I thought that journey would never come to an end, but now my happiness makes up for all that went before. Oh! Poley, tell me I'm not dreaming. Really it seems almost too good to be true."

He bent down and kissed her forehead without enthusiasm.

"It is quite true, nevertheless," he said half absently, "and I'm sure I hope you'll go on being happy. I mean to be. But what has come over you, Vixie? I thought you professed not to care a snap about anything or anybody."

"You know I care about you," she answered softly.

"Oh! yes, we are very good friends," he returned discontentedly, "but we never laid claim to a grand passion, did we? Our marriage was one of interest quite as much as of friendship after all."

"Oh! Poley," she said reproachfully.

"Well, what is it you're grumbling at? Have you ever taken any other tone towards it yourself?"

"One may not have illusions, but surely it is not necessary to go on rubbing in that or any other unpleasant truth. I think at any rate on our wedding night you might have the grace to pretend you care for me, even if you don't."

"Don't let's quarrel, Vixie, especially about trifles. We ought to understand each other by this time. We have the same interests and are going, each of us, to do our utmost to further them. What truer love can there be than that? Is it not much more practical as well as much more lasting than the mawkish thing that poets and children drivel about?"

Violet's brow had clouded over and she was looking, rather dismally, straight into the fire.

"I hardly think either of us would care about love in a cottage!" he went on obstinately; "and after all, poverty is the only test of absolutely disinterested affection."

"I don't know why you persist in talking about that," she remonstrated, "as we are not going to be put to that test, it would surely be more gallant to assume that we should weather it."

"I am very glad to hear you say that," he replied, seizing the opportunity he had been leading up to. "for do you know, I have been rather anxious about our money prospects all through."

Violet looked at him in amazement for some minutes without speaking.

"What on earth do you mean?" she asked at last without a trace of sentiment left in her voice. "What you've settled on me is alone more than enough to keep the wolf from the door, and I imagine it isn't the whole of your income."

He paced up and down the room several times in an agitated way and then stood facing her with his hands by his side, clenched in a somewhat theatrical attitude. She looked up at him, shading her face from the fire-light, and noticed that he had turned a ghastly pale and was breathing hard and fast.

"Don't stand there in that Adelphi attitude, but tell me the truth," she said coldly. "It's too late now for it to make any difference."

"The truth is," he said hoarsely, "that I haven't any income at all. I have been living on my capital for some years and now there is precious little even of that left."

"There are my settlements at any rate," she returned. It was meant for an assertion, but her voice sounded rather like a trembling interrogative.

"Settlements—bah! They were only on paper."

"And do you—mean—to—tell—me—?" she faltered.

"That we have only your income and a hundred or so between us and starvation? Precisely."

"Well, but I haven't any income either," she blurted out, quite taken aback.

There was a long silence before either of them spoke

again. Like the hard-swearing farmer in the anecdote, they thought that no words of theirs were "equal to the occasion." Coryton had often contemplated the possibility of such a catastrophe, but in his heart of hearts he had never believed in it and now that it had come upon him, it was as overwhelming as a bolt from the blue. He was of an extraordinarily sanguine temperament and, as everything had always gone well with him during his life, he was firmly convinced that it always would. Failure is never so intolerable as when success has become habit. With Coryton a belief in his good star was almost a second nature and the shock of his first failure seemed utterly to unnerve him. It was as if somebody had suddenly dealt him a blow full in the face and he had no means of returning it. He stood beside a stiff velvet chair, pale and drawn, his hands twitching nervously. It was impossible to slap fortune back again, so he could only turn his resentment against his wife.

She was, however, the first to break the silence. It was in a very low voice, rather sad than reproachful, that she asked,

"What could have made you do it? You might have known I hadn't much money and you never pretended you loved me."

He had drawn aside the curtain and was looking out into the dismal road, badly lighted and now almost deserted, biting his lips and trying not to think. He heard what she said, but gave no sign that he had done so.

"And I thought you were so clever," she went on, her irritation increasing with his show of indifference, "that you were going to be such a success. But it turns out you are no better than a fool. Fool! Fool! Fool!" she repeated, raising her voice angrily.

He turned half round and cast a contemptuous glance at her.

"I might say the same to you," he answered with a sneer.

"I never deceived you about it," she retorted hotly. "You could have found out exactly how much I had

got, for the asking. But you deceived me, you deceived my uncle, you even deceived the solicitor."

"That at least was clever," he said sarcastically, turning his back and looking out of the window again.

"Clever!" she almost shouted. "If that's being clever, give me a born idiot. Anybody can take people in, if he chooses to tell lies. And you weren't content with telling lies,—you stooped to draw up sham settlements not worth the paper they were written on. I call it fraud. It was obtaining something by false pretences. I believe you could be locked up for it, just as much as if you'd cheated people with a sham check. Clever indeed! What could have been your object in behaving like such a silly fool? You've succeeded in ruining your own prospects as well as mine. What could have possessed you?"

She was working herself up into a passion as she went on and the last sentence was jerked out with an emphasis that was almost fury.

Coryton watched her, as one might watch a drama, and there was a touch of admiration in his gaze. She looked very fine in her rage. She had risen as she spoke and was facing him, erect and defiant.

"What possessed me?" he repeated. "I suppose it was the idea that you had cleverness and money enough for both of us."

"Money!" she cried, with all that contempt for the precious metals, which only those, who have never had the handling of them, know how to express. "So that was your object in marrying me! Well then, all I have to say is that you've made a great mistake."

After a pause she added, "A fatal mistake for both of us. You don't seem to think anything of the opportunities I have lost through my folly in trusting you. I might have married a dozen men just as clever and far more honorable than you. A nice position you have brought me to—tied for life to a creature I hate and despise, and with scarcely a penny to bless myself. The only course I can see open to me is to apply for a divorce and go and live abroad."

"I am afraid that the judges would scarcely satisfy you in that way yet," he replied with an acid smile.

"Well, then, I shall leave you and you can apply for it or not as you think fit. I am not going to live any more with a scoundrelly, broken-down adventurer, who hasn't even the wit to cheat cleverly."

"It's no use losing your temper," returned Coryton with an imperfect effort to appear calm. "Everything you say applies equally, indeed doubly, to you. A man has no means of finding out what income a girl has before he marries her. It would be considered indelicate if he even hinted that he wanted to know. A girl, on the other hand, is generally safe-guarded by relations and lawyers and people, and it is her fault—or, at any rate, theirs—if she doesn't get all she needs settled on her."

"It was precisely over the settlements that you cheated us."

"Yes; but do you suppose for an instant that a parcel of crafty, worldly old lawyers would have let you be cheated, if they hadn't had orders to get you off at any cost? If there has been any sharp practice in this matter, I certainly think I have been more sinned against than sinning."

Violet made an impatient gesture, as if about to speak.

"It is no use indulging in heroics," he said in deliberate tones; "we have got to think out what we'll do. I admit it is serious enough, but we shall gain nothing by acting rashly on the impulse of the moment. I will go downstairs and think the situation over. Perhaps you may be in a calmer state of mind to-morrow morning."

He advanced to kiss her, having now quite recovered his cold, imperturbable manner, but she waved him back imperially.

"Don't touch me!" she cried; "don't dare to touch me, you miserable idiot. Out of my sight, and may I never set eyes on you again."

Coryton knitted his brows and was on the point of making an angry retort, but he abruptly changed his mind, and, taking up his hat and stick, left the room without a word. As he passed out of the hotel he said to the porter in cold, matter-of-fact tones:

"Mrs. Coryton is unwell. You will give orders that a bedroom may be got ready for me on the same floor as hers."

"Lor'," exclaimed the porter confidentially to the barmaid when Coryton had gone out, "that only shows yer 'ow deceptive appearances is. I could 'ave sworn they was a nooly-married couple, and ye know I have 'ad some experience of married couples in moy toime."

"I never thought as they was," returned the barmaid with a toss of the head over her superior astuteness. "Their things was noo an' all that, but there was none of the billin' and cooin' ye sees in them 'oney-mooners. Prob'bly they ain't used ter travellin' an' 'ad ter git a noo rig out."

"Billin' an' cooin' don't prove nothing," said the porter, indignant at the doubts cast upon his experience. "Why, Lor' bless yer, 'arf of them toffs just marry for what they can git, an' there ain't no more love about their marriages than there is rabbit in one of our rabbit poys. 'Twon't be so when you and Oi gits spliced, will it, Mariar?" he added with a leer.

"Oh! go on wi' yer, Mr. Briggs; I ain't so much as promised as we ever shall," she replied with one of those grotesque attempts at coquetry in which the British middle and lower classes always fail so signally.

Meanwhile Coryton was making his way to the pier in a very gloomy frame of mind. It was a bad business certainly, but he was of a sanguine temperament and nothing ever affected him seriously for long.

If they had not money, they had brains, which was much better, he tried to argue to himself. But the consolation to be found in that reflection was distinctly forced and he found it more difficult to take a hopeful view than he had ever done before. He still believed in his destiny, of course, and he still believed in his wife's, but he foresaw months and even years of struggles and was not by any means sure that either would be able to stand them. His was not a demonstrative nature, but his regard for Violet was none the less sincere. They had always been good friends, he reflected, and there was no reason why they should not

continue to be so. If only they had found out the true state of each other's affairs four-and-twenty hours before, they might each have carved out a great career and enjoyed many opportunities of doing good turns to each other.

Now they were a mutual handicap, chronic obstacles in the path of success. Their position was a standing refutation of the silly proverb about union being strength. If only the fatal step of that afternoon could be retraced now, before the girl was compromised. A foolish scheme passed through his head for a collusive divorce or nullity suit, but he speedily dismissed the idea, not so much for its difficulty as for the scandal it would create. The slightest scandal in a public man's private life is nowadays made much more of than any public enormity he may have been guilty of, however outrageous.

There was no getting over hard facts. Too much astuteness had brought him to grief. He saw the folly of it all now that it was too late, and he was not long in coming to the conclusion that his only course was to make the best of a bad job. But that did not make the bad job any more acceptable. The blow to his vanity was the hardest part of all and he walked up and down the pier, reproaching himself in as unmeasured terms as any Violet had made use of towards him.

The charm of Coryton's character was that nothing ever really upset him for long. Before he had been out an hour the worst of his fit of the blues was over and, as he stopped to light a cigar, the match revealed a fairly cheerful face, in which no trace of his worries remained.

"After all," he concluded, as he turned his steps back to the hotel, "the thing to be thought of is the future, not the past. I daresay our marriage will not turn out any the less satisfactory for the queer way in which the honeymoon has begun."

Violet meanwhile was taking the matter far more to heart. Her husband's indifference had revealed to her a fact which she had long suspected, that she was really and truly in love with him. When this first occurred to her, she had scouted it with a merry laugh.

That she, who had never taken anything or anybody seriously—scarcely even herself—should fall in love, was too preposterous a notion.

For a long time she had kept up the pretence that her marriage with Coryton was to be merely one of convenience—the alliance of two clever people for their mutual advancement—and when she had detected the first symptoms of love-sickness, she was utterly puzzled and thought of sending for the doctor to prescribe for influenza. As the symptoms became unmistakable, she became even more moody and fitful than young ladies usually are during this distemper. Still she did not give up the attempt to deceive herself on the subject until after the marriage, when she was stung to the quick by the complacent way, in which he took it for granted that love was an impossibility between them.

Her heart now sank within her and she felt a strange, disappointed yearning, which could leave no further room for doubt. It was this aching of unsatisfied love, far more than the revelation of mere money trouble, that kept her tossing and moaning, in agony of mind, all through her wedding night. Unrequited love is hard enough for any woman to bear, but it becomes almost unendurable when united with pride and cleverness and unscrupulousness sufficient to remove mountains.

The revelation of her husband's poverty had strengthened rather than diminished Violet's love for him. She felt that even love in a cottage would be endurable with him; that there would be an infinite joy in denying herself pleasures and luxuries in order that he might enjoy them in her stead; that their temporary poverty—for, of course, with such a genius as her husband, poverty could only be temporary—would aid her in winning his love.

But her heart sank as she contemplated the immediate future. She was not used to poverty and, from all accounts, it seemed to be unanimously considered a very disagreeable thing. Poverty would leave her so desperately alone in the world. There are none so desperately alone as the poor rich. The

rich poor are happy: their wants are few, luxury is undreamed of, and they can save money on a hundred a year. The poor rich, on the other hand, have appearances to keep up, expensive tastes, which grudge if they be not satisfied, and expensive friends, with whom friendship means the exaction of usefulness. Violet knew full well that, if she and her husband could not manage to keep up appearances, they would speedily be dropped by all their fairweather friends, who now only saluted what they believed to be the rising sun. And what more utter loneliness was imaginable than the solitary society of an unsympathetic husband?

It was over some such thoughts as these that Violet fell into a heavy slumber in the small hours of the morning.

When she woke up, Coryton was standing beside her with a tea-tray, and her pleasure at his thoughtfulness overcame all recollection of last night's disagreeable scene.

"This is good of you, Poley," she said, with a grateful look in her tear-stained eyes.

The traces of her weeping and the anxiety tinged with affection in her tones could not but affect Coryton, nor could he ignore her undeniable prettiness in her night-dress of lace and silk, with the rosy light through the blind tinting the rounded outline of her face. He felt almost remorseful and answered her with far more deference than was usual with him.

"Not at all. I only came to see if you were inclined to come on to Paris by the early boat. We shall be as cross as two sticks in this dead-alive place. At Paris we can at least get something fit to eat and see a naughty play,—two admirable specifics against the blues."

Violet brightened up at once.

"You have forgiven me for my crossness last night?" she asked eagerly. "You know I didn't mean a word I said."

"Well, don't let it occur again," he returned half-playfully, in the tone of one lecturing a naughty child. "We've got an up-hill struggle before us—the

struggle of keeping up appearances on nothing. But that is the very reason why we should try to pull together all the more harmoniously in harness. We are in for it now and we can't afford to quarrel. If any people ever were necessary to each other, it's you and I. Now get your things together as quickly as you can and we'll have a week's dissipation in Paris. By the end of it we shall probably see our way more clearly. There is no such aid to reflection as a good bout of dissipation."

"We shall get on all right," replied Violet, whose good humor had now entirely returned, "if only you've a little patience with me. To-night we'll dine at the Café Riche, take a *baignoire* at the Variétés and wind up with the Moulin Rouge. I have always wanted to be taken to the Moulin Rouge."

"All right," he assented smiling, "but you must be ready to start in half an hour."

Thus melted the first and last cloud that overshadowed the blossoming of the Green Bay Tree.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RIFT WITHIN THE LUTE.

Too fair to worship, too divine to love.

H. H. MILLMAN.

CANNES is decidedly the pleasantest place in the Riviera, for those who are admitted to the vulgar and inflated clique, which passes there for Society. It is a close oligarchy which makes up for its vulgarity by an affectation of exclusiveness.

Monte Carlo, on the other hand, is as much a democracy as a great public-school, where neither rank nor brains nor culture are the passport to respect, but only success at games.

Physical-force games are the school idols, games of pure chance those of Monte Carlo, and the worshippers are on a footing of such absolute equality as is only found in the dreams of crack-brained political philosophers. Nowhere else in the whole round world will you find duchesses of the blood and horizontals of the flesh, illustrious statesmen and bibulous mummers, cut-throats from Calabria and cut-purses from Jerusalem-ate-Bowe, Alsatia and Arcadia, monarchs, journalists, money-lenders, the famous and the infamous, all sitting amicably round the same table, hobnobbing, exchanging amenities, offering up the same incense to the same false god.

Mentone is devoted to a gloomy piety and the adoration of ill-health. There the residents are looked up to according to the acuteness of their maladies, those who are not consumptive do their best to simulate the symptoms, and those unfortunates, who find it impossible to conceal their robustness, are looked upon as outsiders and made to feel themselves outcasts.

Bordighera worships the Church and Stage.

Beaulieu and Nice are respectively English and French suburbs of Monte Carlo.

And thus I have summed up the whole of the Riviera.

Cannes, the close oligarchy, looks down upon it all (democracy, aegrocracy—to coin a bastard word—and religion-and-water), with thin contempt. The full vials of this are poured upon those strangers within its gates who are in it, but not of it. Mr. and Mrs. Wilfrid Tyrconnel were beginning to find themselves in this position.

When they first arrived, still honeymooning, they were acclaimed with open arms by the Pigeon's innumerable friends, who were most of them, more or less, members of the various sets that combine to form the governing class at Cannes during the winter. But his wife was unable to adapt herself to the tone of the place. Her strict views about right and wrong, descending to irritating details; her intolerance of the scarcely veiled humbug which goes to make up the conventions of society; her rooted

antipathy to pleasure for pleasure's sake, to the whole spirit of hedonism, which is the keystone of life at Cannes, put her out of harmony with her surroundings and brought about incessant friction.

That peculiar hybrid, the Cannes young man, an invertebrate individual who poses as a person of light and leading in this second-rate colony and prosed about his prowess at the golf-links or his luck at Monte Carlo, said that young Mrs. Tyrconnel gave herself airs. Meaning that she snubbed him, which she did, unmercifully. The women took much the same tone.

Like all enthusiasts, Gwendolen was painfully deficient in tact. Had she not started a tirade against Monte Carlo, under the nose of the Grand-Duchess, with some very unpleasant references to the bad example set by bigwigs who went there to play? Had not Lady Greyheather and the Hon. Mrs. Worrie come to call and found her surrounded by eleven chronic old maids, busy making stomachers for the deep-sea fishermen, and had she not introduced every one of these ill-favored *Parcæ* and tried to force Lady Greyheather to take part in their humble revels over "real English tea" cooked in a tin *etna*? Were there not a hundred and one new stories afloat about her eccentricities and outrageous assurance? Was she not the chief subject of conversation whenever the Vicomtesse Lepeigne had exhausted her usual stock of gossip with Madame Mufle at the Réunion and when Miss Lyke-Spitelle waxed especially confidential with Mrs. Bach-byte? A good deal of this murmuring reached Gwendolen's ears, but she was of most Puritan obstinacy in her ethics and what she did was done almost as much from a distorted sense of humor as for conscience's sake.

The wedding had been boisterously quiet. That is to say, Gwendolen had insisted on its being absolutely quiet, and her aunt, while grudgingly acquiescing, had secretly done her utmost to make it as rampageous as possible. Gwendolen had "views" about marriage. God forbid that she should consider it a sacrament, for she hated ritualism almost as much as she hated the

Pope and the Devil,—two very real enemies in her psalm of life. But she claimed that it was a very sacred, holy thing, almost as sacred in its way as the Lord's Supper, wherein she took part every Sunday morning in her life. She did not invite herds of friends and acquaintances to watch her partake of that holy feast. Why then should they come to gape upon her on this other sacred occasion, when most of all a modest maiden would desire to be alone with her nearest and dearest? Her beloved old father to give her away and Wilfrid, her chosen one, to receive her; Aunt Maria and the servants as witnesses; no bridesmaids, for, like most old heads on young shoulders, Gwendolen had few friends of her own age; and the solemn simple service in the old church of Grantchester which she had known and loved so well from earliest infancy. That was her idea of a happy marriage,—a fit prelude to the happy life, of which, in her trustful innocence, she felt assured, so long as she did her duty.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles had had short patience when she heard these views enunciated. She had had visions of herself, clad in scarlet sammet, mystic, wonderful, flouncing up the aisle of St. George's, Hanover Square, and exchanging familiar greetings with marquesses and right honorables in the chancel, while Plantagenet-Unkels and the Overdone-Joneses sat and heard each other groan with jealousy in the dimmest recesses of the church. However, she knew it was no use arguing when once Gwendolen had made up her mind, so she agreed to a quiet wedding, and even to a quiet wedding at Cambridge, which was the hardest pill of any, and then set diligently to work to get hold of everybody whose name would look well in the *Post*.

In the event, Mrs. de Courcy Miles was woefully disappointed, for, at Gwendolen's request, Tyrconnel only asked his own immediate relatives and a few intimate friends. Coryton and his wife were away at Monte Carlo; Pimlico was laid up with influenza; Lady Giddy wouldn't come; Lady Elizabeth and Theodora were beyond her ken; Colonel Lockhart and Mr.

Rupert Clifford disappointed her at the eleventh hour. So she had to be content with unaristocratic Lord Baltinglass and his dismal sister in the way of "quality," Mr. Toadey-Snaile to represent the Legislature, the Archdeaconess for the Church, and Sir Cinnatus Spreadeagle for the Army, Navy and (more especially) the Reserve forces.

The Cambridge contingent of course mustered in force, but they were of small account. The Vice-Chancellor officiated, assisted by Funnie-Ffoulkes and Professor Done-Brown of the woeful countenance. Belinda and Araminta donned new gowns for the occasion and twittered like a pair of canaries. Lady Catchbois brought out her old brocade and Mrs. Flummery-North appeared in a wondrous violet bonnet. Spofforth did full justice to the Professor's champagne.

The honeymoon—like many honeymoons—had been a period of transition and disillusioning. Before three weeks were up, Gwendolen had realized that her husband was ineradicably wedded to the world and that not even her gentle influence would long be able to restrain him from returning to his old love for excitement. Tyrconnel for his part had discovered that even pure, flawless goodness palls after a time and that angelic beauty is only aggravating, when it is accompanied by copy-book views of life.

The first time he was left alone for a couple of hours since his wedding—it was in Paris: she had gone to her dressmaker's and he to the Hammam—he had a good hard think about things in general and thought some very hard things about Gwendolen and his marriage in particular. Perhaps it was the luxurious atmosphere of the bath or the epicurean atmosphere of this Paris, which he knew and had enjoyed so well but was now no longer allowed to enjoy, that made him take French views of marriage and incompatibility of temper.

"She's too good for me, 'pon my word she is," he mused bitterly, as he watched the smoke of his cigarette curl up above his couch. "I really begin to sympathize with the Athenians, who got so tired of hearing Aristides called 'the Just,' that they drove

him out of their city. I thought I was marrying a woman, but I find I have married an angel, and an angel is rather too much of a handful for a humble mortal like myself."

It had not come to any open quarrel yet, but Wilfrid had several times turned away impatiently, when Gwendolen pronounced her decision in her downright, uncompromising way, upon some minor point on which he had set his heart for the moment. At Paris she would not lunch at Voisin's nor dine at the Café Anglais, because they were "too extravagant;" she would not go to the theatres, because they did not square with her notions of propriety; and as to going to hear Yvette Guilbert, she would as soon have thought of witnessing Miss Gussie Gutter's "turn" in a palace of varieties of our own Leicester Square.

Now, as Tyrconnel ruefully asked himself in the cooling-room of the Turkish bath, if you don't eat good food and you don't see naughty plays and you don't hear Yvette Guilbert, where's the use of staying in Paris at all?" When he thought over it less impatiently afterwards, he admitted to himself that he could not picture Gwen sitting out "*Le Coquin de Printemps*" at the *Nouveautés* or going into boisterous hilarity over "*Joséphine, elle est malade*" or "*L'amour mouillé*." So after a few days, during which he vainly tried to interest himself in the pictures at the Louvre and got snubbed for suggesting a visit to the Morgue; drove in a one-horse shay in the Bois; looked into the shop-windows at the Palais-Royal; made pilgrimages to the Sainte-Chapelle and the Eiffel tower; and dined at Bouillon Duval; he became anxious to move on and said so to Gwendolen.

It was a great surprise to her and she was inclined to remonstrate.

"Why!" she said, "you stipulated for at least three weeks in Paris, which you said was the most delightful place on earth. Now you want to hurry me off, just as I am beginning to learn something about the pictures too."

"Well, my dear," he replied, "the pictures can wait till we return and all our friends are on the Riviera."

"Oh! Wilfrid," she said in aggrieved tones, "are you so tired of me already that you want to get back to your friends? Besides we are not quite without friends. Mr. Rupert Clifford has asked us to go over to Saint Germain on Thursday, and Aunt Maria and your Aunt Tyrconnel are to be here next week."

"That settles it. We absolutely must leave this week."

"But I specially wanted to wait for your Aunt Kezia. She promised to take me to the Gospel Temperance Mission, which her friend, Miss Mitten, is establishing in the *Quartier Latin*. You scamp," she added playfully, "I don't believe you want to see our good aunts a bit!"

"No, I do not," he replied with the very obvious compliment, to which she had been leading up; "at least not now. We have not been married so long that we want intruders yet. I am sure Miss Mitten will be glad to show you her mission-hall any day. Nothing shall induce me to stay after this week. The place is too outrageously dull."

"Dull!" Gwendolen gasped. She looked at him with quivering lips for some moments, as if she had received a blow in the face.

Tyrconnel was penitent at once.

"My darling!" he exclaimed eagerly; "you know I didn't mean it like that. I could never be *really* dull anywhere with you. But we may as well be at a lively place as a dull one and this is enough to give any one the blues."

"What! Paris? But you were so enthusiastic about it before we came."

"Yes, but that was a different Paris. Don't misunderstand me. I am quite willing not to go to theatres and restaurants, if you think them wrong, but you mustn't expect me to like plum-cake so much, when all the plums are taken out. . . . Dear, dear me! What is the matter? Don't look at me with that pained, drawn expression, as if I had uttered some blasphemy. I only live for you now and we shall always be quite happy so long as we love each other, as I pray we always shall."

"You are very dear to me," she said softly, taking his face between her hands and chastely kissing his forehead. "but I sometimes wish you were different in character. The old Adam dies very hard in you yet."

"It will be all right some day, my good angel. Meanwhile I would not have you differ one iota from what God has made you. In my eyes you are perfect as you are."

"Hush! Wilfrid dear," she said, looking into his eyes with an air of infinite tenderness, and speaking with more emotion than she often displayed, "there is none perfect save One." And she pointed upward.

When his feelings were deeply stirred, Tyrconnel felt this kind of ecstatic worship for his wife, but his moods soon passed and, as the weeks slipped by, they became rarer, while the contrary moods, when he repined at the weariness of his present life, became more frequent. He was proud to be good and true, and he vowed to himself fifty times a day that nothing should make him swerve one hair's breadth from the narrow path. But the mental struggle and the constant murmuring, which found no outlet, as he rarely complained to Gwendolen and was too loyal to do so to any one else,—these were telling on his health and temper.

While never particularly robust, he had not needed coddling or been considered delicate as a boy and had constantly led a healthy outdoor life. When he appeared at Cannes, every one noticed that he stooped slightly and was pale and poorly to look at, and, when his old friends began to rally him upon it and tell him, as Pimlico brutally did on one occasion at the Beau-site, that evidently married life didn't agree with him, he was not slow in showing that he had replaced his lost good health by a newly-found bad temper, which they were quite unprepared for.

"I should advise raw beefsteaks every morning and a couple of dozen oysters the last thing at night," said Williams, putting on a consulting-room expression.

"Only not Mediterranean oysters," put in Wilmot,

who of course was not far off, "you must get a barrel of Marennes from a man in the rue Saint-Honoré. I'll give you his address. Mediterranean oysters give you typhoid."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WANING HONEYMOON.

The reason why so few marriages are happy is because young ladies spend their time in making nets, not in making cages.—
DEAN SWIFT.

CANNES is an inconvenient place for those who want to play at Monte Carlo. It is a long day's excursion, involving a barbarously early breakfast and a return in the small hours of the next morning, if you mean to play seriously. Most of the fast people at Cannes resign themselves to this and either make rare expeditions, whenever the gambling fever comes over them, or devote a few days to it once or twice during the winter. For the rest, baccarat at the Cercle Nautique and poker-parties in the hotels and villas generally suffice, and you hear disdainful remarks about the "dreadful rabble" at the tables and about the discomforts of the hotels at Monte Carlo. Most of our friends, however, flitted to and fro between the two places, coming to Cannes for their society and returning to Monte Carlo for their dissipation.

A great yearning had come over Tyrconnel for dissipation. He had now been "cribbed, cabined and confined" within the strait-waistcoat of virtue for quite a long time and was heartily sick of it. Getting back among his old companions in revelry awoke all the old longings in him. Gwendolen had sufficiently disciplined him to keep the passionate side of his nature well under control, but the irresistible craving for excitement, which had always been one of his most ingrained characteristics, was now rapidly

getting the better of him. Every day he became more morose and unbearable. Any allusion to Monte Carlo made him irritable and yet he could not be five minutes with one of his old boon companions without leading the conversation round to it, and his eyes would glisten as Wilmot narrated extraordinary runs at trente-et-quarante, or Williams enlarged upon the fabulous gains made by a syndicate of young men who had come out with a capital of £100 to play the Labouchere system.

Coryton tried to persuade Tyrconnel to come over for the day, but he said Gwendolen would not hear of it and hastily added, on detecting a smile on his friend's Mephistophelian countenance, that besides he had no wish to do so. Meanwhile his rickety appearance was getting more and more confirmed, and he would give vent to outbursts of temper at the least provocation, outbursts which often terminated in an ugly cough.

Last of all Gwendolen noticed it.

"You are not looking well, dear Wilfrid," she said one morning, with a slight quiver of anxiety in her voice. "I wonder whether this place suits you."

They were standing on their balcony after breakfast. She was feasting her eyes on the intense joyousness of nature, the deep, deep blue of sea and sky, the sparkle of the sunshine in the fountain beneath their windows and the soothing solemnity of the stately palms hard by. The Riviera reminded her more and more each day of the Bible lands as it has done many another who has searched the Scriptures. Her husband's illness had been dawning upon her for some time, but it never formed itself as a reality to her mind before now, and even now it did not do so as a serious one. She was looking out towards the Esterels and deducing from the aspect of the wooded hills in the foreground the truth of the comparison of the man in the gospel who began by seeing "men as trees walking," when his sight was restored to him. Those trees resembled men in the dim distance. Presently she relapsed into a former train of thought and looked at the young man again and reproached herself—without any thought of

bitterness—that she had thought so much of the welfare of his soul, so little of that of his body.

He too was straining his eyes out over the horizon, but it was towards Golfe-Juan, where the Corsican landed, and Antibes, whose obtruding promontory angered him, for, like Gwen, it divided him from the gay principality, whither his mental vision now struggled to force the physical. At last he said with a hoarse voice and an abrupt manner that was meant to be determined,

“I think I shall run over to Monte Carlo for the day. Let me see,” he went on pulling out his watch, “if I put on my boots now, I shall just have time to catch the 9.45 train. I suppose it’s no use asking you to come? Well, I daresay you won’t be sorry to get rid of me for one day after such a dose of me all these weeks!”

The last sentence was said with an attempt at playfulness, which proved a signal failure.

Gwendolen heard him out with an ominous silence, biting her lip and looking at him with large glistening eyes like those of a sorrowing guardian-angel. A torrent of expostulation was twice on the point of overflowing from her lips, but she checked it with an effort and then, with forced calmness, she said slowly,

“You could not go to-day, Wilfrid. We have promised Madame Lepeigne to go for a picnic to the island.”

“Bother!” he conceded ungraciously. Then he added with a very obstinate look in his face, “well, I shall go to-morrow.”

“To-morrow,” echoed his wife with a half malicious feeling of triumph at the fresh unanswerable obstacle, “to-morrow will be *Sunday*.”

Tyrconnel made a gesture of annoyance and said:

“Well, Monday then,” as he turned abruptly back into the sitting-room, striking his head sharply against the window as he did so.

Nothing more was said about Monte Carlo until Sunday night, when Gwendolen broached the subject again after dinner. The moment was not well chosen, for Tyrconnel had been worried into two attendances at

church, with the result that he was now irritable and rebellious. The least thing seemed to tire him now. Moreover, the sermon that morning, by the diminutive Bishop of Bedlam, had been devoted to denunciations of the "House of Rimmon," and the eternal fallacies about suicides, the grotesque assertion that the concerts and the gardens at Monte Carlo are the "price of blood," with all the other extravagances of a narrow and ill-balanced mind had outraged, his sense of fairness.

They were in their private sitting-room. It was a chilly evening and a fire had been lighted, but it burned badly. The lamp had been carefully trimmed and added an artificial gloom to that which already existed in their minds.

Each had an expression of being profoundly bored. Tyrconnel sat in a fold-up-chair affecting to read "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," which Gwendolen, who had views about "Sunday-books," had forced on him. He found it difficult to keep his attention to it and indeed scarcely cared to try, for the type was blurred by the dim light and the subject had not the faintest interest for him.

Meanwhile Gwendolen sat on the other side of the fireplace turning over somewhat idly a large parcel of tracts, recently sent her by Miss Tyrconnel. The waning of the honeymoon had not destroyed in her the minute interest in the smallest movements of her husband, which devoted brides sometimes touchingly display. She kept watching him with an expression, which it would have puzzled a stranger to explain. It contained solicitude for his health and a kind of guardian-angel tenderness, which suited her style of beauty; but there was also a marked shade of annoyance at his lack of interest in her book and, as the yawns succeeded each other like minute-guns, a frown began to form itself on her broad calm brow.

"If you're tired, you'd better go to bed," she said at last, with unusual impatience, in the tone of a mother lecturing a troublesome child.

It was the fifth long-drawn yawn in five minutes, and he had slowly pulled out his hunter-watch, looked at

it and shut it up with an ostentatious click three times during the same period.

"My dear, it's only half-past eight. I really couldn't go to bed with the hens like that. Not even to oblige you," he added with a touch of mockery in his voice; "I think I shall go down to the billiard-room for a cigar."

"I have got something to say to you first," she returned, in tones which only served to increase his irritation.

"Well!" he asked with an ostentatious lack of interest.

"You are not going to Monte Carlo to-morrow."

She had tried to impart a pleading, or at least an interrogative accent to the sentence, but it sounded to Tyrconnel more like a menace. There was a sulky silence of about two minutes.

"Are you?" she added pleadingly, as he showed no sign of making answer.

"You seem to have settled it for me," he replied with some bitterness.

"That is good of you, Wilfrid," she said more softly, taking this for acquiescence and laying a hand affectionately on his.

He rose to his feet without responding to the caress and said emphatically,

"Pray don't mistake me. I have made up my mind to go and I shall go. I need a change. My health is suffering from the monotony of this place. You religious people are so selfish," he went on with rising anger. "I don't believe you care a snap whether I am ill or well, happy or miserable, so long as your bread-and-butter theories of life are observed. Pray, what do you know of the world outside your school-room door and your Cambridge lecture-halls? Who set you up to be a ruler and a judge? Where did you learn——"

The tirade ended in a fit of coughing. He rocked himself to and fro for some minutes and then sank back into his chair. But his words had probed her to the quick and she stood before him with hands clenched by her side and a strange light in her eyes,

scarcely noticing his cough. When he had partly recovered, she returned to the charge.

"The world! No, indeed," she answered with a fine scorn. "I know little enough of it and I care not to know. But I have at least learned—even in the small and humble sphere which you so despise—I have learned to distinguish between good and evil. And the love I bear you will, I pray to God, inspire me to protest, so long as I have breath, when I see you setting your face towards wrong-doing."

"I must be allowed to judge what is right and wrong for myself," he rejoined in a faint voice. "I am willing to do all I can to humor your whims and prejudices. I have denied myself pleasures and exposed myself to actual discomforts in order to do so, but there are limits to such sacrifices and you must not tax my good-nature too far."

She was about to reply when the discussion was interrupted by the entrance of the porter with a letter. Tyrconnel took it carelessly, examined the address with a slight show of curiosity, opened the envelope and began to read a little ill-scented, ill-written note, then hastily crumpled it up and thrust it into his breast-pocket, his face gradually becoming crimson, as much with anger as with embarrassment. Gwen-dolen watched him with more astonishment than alarm, but a certain qualm of uneasiness could not be altogether avoided, and she stood before him, as if waiting for and confidently expecting an explanation.

As he offered none, she said, taking up the end of his last speech,

"Would it be 'taxing your good-nature' too far to ask you whom that letter is from?"

"I can't tell you, Gwen," he faltered, suddenly taking a more conciliatory tone. "I must ask you to believe that it does not concern you in any way."

"What concerns you concerns me, Wilfrid."

"It does not concern my present life. No good purpose would be served by showing it to you. I will show you what store I set by it," and he stooped down to the fire, held the letter between the logs until it

caught the flame, and then gave it a vicious dig with the end of the bellows. The flicker of the fire gave his face, now very pale again, a strange and ghastly color.

Nothing was said for some time. Then he bent over and kissed her forehead without a trace of sentiment.

"Good-night, Gwen," he said, "I have some letters to write and am going downstairs for a smoke. I daresay you will be asleep before I turn in."

"More letters!" she said, stroking her forehead upwards in a weary way, "and do they not concern our present life either? You used to have no secrets from me. I feel already as if we had been married years and years and years. You have begun to slight me and the joy is ebbing from my life. I did not dream that you would tire of me so soon."

"Don't be a goose, Gwen," he replied irritably, as he sauntered out of the room with his hands deep in his pockets, slamming the door behind him.

Gwendolen remained for a long time leaning against the mantelpiece, thinking. She looked fixedly at the damp logs and her eyes filled with tears. Presently she drew herself up erect, as if to do battle with these sad thoughts. She crossed the room, found her Bible, and sat down on a stool to read the fourteenth chapter of Saint John, which had upon her the effect of a cordial on a fainting man.

There was a serene smile of trustful happiness on her countenance as she turned down the lamp and made her way to her bedroom.

"Peace I leave with you," she murmured, "my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HOUSE OF RIMMON.

“ I want to see the wheels go round.”

HELEN'S BABIES.

“ It is a quarter to twelve; I must look sharp or I shall be late for business,” exclaimed Harold Gaverigan, tossing his unfinished cigarette over the parapet and making an unusual display of alacrity.

“ Nonsense, old chap,” said Coryton, leaning back languidly, on the big green reversible seat which he occupied on the terrace. “ You can't coop yourself up in that filthy casino on a glorious day like this. Why not get hold of Lady Giddy and drive over with Vixie and me to Nice for lunch at the London House.”

“ Oh! do, Mr. Gaverigan,” added Mrs. Coryton, looking up with a bright smile from an elaborate pattern she was executing on the gravel with her parasol. “ That would be jolly.”

Gaverigan, ever susceptible to attentions from the fair sex, thereupon assumed a very sorrowful air, like the rich young man in the parable, for the casino was all-engrossing to him.

“ I should have enjoyed it of all things,” he said regretfully, “ but for one thing, I always have lunch at eleven in the French fashion and, for another, I rather packed myself up yesterday, as they phrase it here, and I have fifty-four louis to recoup to-day. I am afraid I must run along now or I shan't get a seat at all, and it always spells ruin to try to play standing.”

“ Very well,” laughed Violet with a friendly nod, “ we won't spoil your sport. I hope you will win

a pot of money to-day and be able to give yourself a holiday and drive with us to-morrow."

The terrace at Monte Carlo is a pleasant lounge at noon in winter. There are not enough people about to be exacting in the matter of dress; you can give yourself over to the full enjoyment of your surroundings. And such surroundings! Assuredly the world contains no other such favored corner, where art and nature have so conspired to erect a paradise.

Coryton and his wife, experts in the science of extracting all possible enjoyment out of their surroundings, had been sitting there for about half an hour, looking the picture of content, basking in the sunshine and drawing in long breaths of ozone as the faintest of sea-breezes played upon their brows. And they looked no less prosperous than they did contented. There was not a trace of care of any sort upon their smooth, fresh young faces; they were dressed to convey an impression of wealth—as all wise people with their own way to make in the world always must be—but what is a still greater triumph of astuteness, their clothes were made to aim rather at comfort than display.

Violet's dress was of fawn-colored cloth, exquisitely fitting and distinguished by a thin trimming of choice sable; her head looked very knowing under a prettily twisted toque of violet velvet bordered with a couple of sable tails. Coryton looked spick and span in a double-breasted jacket of dark gray tweed with navy blue trousers and Oxford shoes. The usual Monte-Carlo hat of soft black felt was perched jauntily on the side of his head so as to display his curls.

They were very little changed since we saw them last and certainly not for the worse. Violet had not lost her sprightliness, but had added to it some of the charms of maturity. She had always been good friends with her husband since they were boy and girl, but it was only during the last few weeks that she had come to admit to herself that it was all very ridiculous, but really she was getting quite spoony about that dear Poley. Love is always the most permanent when

it follows, instead of preceding marriage, and Coryton, who would have laughed aloud at the suggestion of his possibly giving way to any such weakness as love, was getting daily happier in the society of his wife and prouder of her good looks and cleverness.

They watched Gaverigan hurrying up the terrace-steps towards the casino, and Violet, half closing her eyes to enjoy the brightness of the coloring around her, remarked playfully upon the young man's unusual display of energy.

"Yes," returned Coryton, "he has fits of energy like that. If he only kept them up, he might accomplish wonders. You remember when he went down to Sheffield, utterly unknown there, and started a candidature on lines of his own?"

"No. What happened?"

"He had meetings every night for a week and after the first three, carried votes of confidence in his candidature. Then he calmly went away, and never came near them from that day to this."

"It's a pity he gambles so much and so recklessly. He's certain to bring himself to grief one of these days."

"Yes, he should only gamble in the way we do, and never back anything except certainties. I have no patience with people who persist in backing uncertainties."

"Like that dear good Pigeon, for instance."

"Pouf! He plays like a lunatic. Gaverigan at any rate has some method in his madness. By the way, I wouldn't mind betting my boots we shall see Pidge over here before long, in spite of all his new-laid virtue and the terrorism of that Saint Nitouche of a wife of his."

"I don't want your boots," she laughed, "but I'll bet you something nicer, say, a kiss or, better still, a new bonnet from the rue de la Paix, that if he does come it'll be without her. In fact, I shouldn't wonder if it meant a breach between them."

"Well," he said, lowering his voice, which was an unnecessary precaution as there was no one within shouting distance, "there most certainly will be a

breach between them, unless Miss Sarah Popkins should happen to come in for a fortune in the course of the next few weeks."

"That dreadful Sally Popkins? I really think it's a mistake coming down to that kind of instrument."

Coryton looked into her eyes with an amused smile.

"I almost believe," he said incredulously, "that you—are—jealous!"

Violet pouted.

"And if I am, I don't see that that is—so very—ridiculous."

A cloud had gathered on her face as she finished the sentence. The smile slowly died away on his face and he looked vexed for a moment.

"Vixie, you mustn't be ridiculous. Have you such a poor opinion of me after all these years? Vi, I feel hurt, I really do. Could you so misjudge me as to think I have not control over myself in my dealings with such creatures, or that I would demean myself to touch them with the end of a barge-pole except to make them useful? Don't you know that I am a being entirely destitute of emotions or affections of any sort or kind—except of course for you, my dear?" he added, with a ceremonious bow.

"I am glad you made that reservation, howbeit reluctantly," she retorted, recovering her good-humor rapidly. "But tell me what the scheme is. Sally is to blackmail Pidge by threatening to tell the saintly Gwendolen. That's all very well for Sally, but where do you come in? You're not going to share the spoil with her, I suppose?"

"Hardly. The thing isn't yet quite thought out. Perhaps if she worries him judiciously, he may come to me for advice. Or perhaps again she may produce a breach between him and Gwendolen, as I was saying just now. In any case he gets back into my team again, and he was useful, you must admit."

"'M yes. Useful in a way. But is it worth soiling your hands like that for such an object? Suppose it all came out."

"I shall take precautions. So far as I am concerned there will be nothing to come out. It won't need such

a frightful amount of astuteness to accomplish that much. I have had dealings with these Samaritans before, you know."

"Yes, I know you have," she said drily; "and I wish you'd stop having dealings with them."

"I daresay you do. But, my good Vixie, beggars can't choose. You know how hard up we are."

"I do indeed," she said bitterly.

"Well!" was all he said, but it was very much in the tone of the Q. E. D. after one of Euclid's rigmарoles.

Violet suddenly gave a merry peal of laughter.

"Upon my word," she said, "I think we are the most wonderful people in the world. Here we are about on the verge of beggary and we are as jolly as sandboys, without the least care or fear of any sort or kind to alloy our happiness for an instant. Some people would be ordering in cartridges for their revolver or sending round to the chemist for chloral."

Coryton joined in the laugh.

"Yes, that's all very fine, but this sort of situation would very soon get beyond a joke. We must think of something."

"After all, if the worst comes to the worst, we can always borrow from our friends."

"The worst must not come to the worst. Borrowing from friends means the destruction of all their other spheres of usefulness. I have always believed in the truth of old Shake-Bacon's injunction. 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be.' It is far better to take what you want by strategy. The Professor's next instalment in our Automatic Drainage Scheme comes due in a week or two. Meanwhile, all we want is a little ready money to go on with."

"Poor old cock," said Violet, dismissing the Professor, with a shrug. "Shall we have another supper-party after the rooms close with a game of poker to wind up?"

"No, that's risky. People here play too well. Besides they want such a lot of pressing. As they can play at roulette and trente-et-quarante for eleven hours a day——"

"And be sure of not being cheated."

"Precisely my meaning!—they aren't likely to want to come and play poker afterwards, where that certitude is not so profound."

"What a pity Pidge isn't here."

"Yes. It would almost be worth while going over to Cannes, if that confounded wet-blanket woman weren't there. I must have managed things very badly to let her marry him."

"There are several irons in the fire here that I should not care to leave. There are Mr. Shepheard's investments and Mr. Plantagenet-Unkels's idea of starting a paper, not to mention my Boyard, who only wants me to say the word in order to present me with the most magnificent tiara of diamonds that can be purchased in all Bucharest."

"Come, come, Vixie. It'll soon be my turn to be jealous."

"Your turn! Don't flatter yourself that I was jealous, conceited boy. However, I'll strike a bargain with you: my Boyard for your Sally."

"My Sally! You scamp. She's only a means to an end. And by Jove! here is the end. Why, Pigeon, old boy? Who'd have thought of seeing you in this wicked place? Is your wife with you?"

Sure enough it was Tyrconnel, walking along the terrace with an uncertain step, as if the place were strange to him. What a difference between this haggard youth and the eager, sturdy Wilfrid Tyrconnel who had trod this terrace twelve short months before! His face was flushed with the excitement of arrival and his frail, boyish face looked quite pretty as he stood before them. Both were struck at once by the change in him.

"She is at Cannes. I am only over for the day," he said shortly, in answer to Coryton's question. Then, turning to Violet, he seemed to recover his good spirits and began to rally her on her perennial childhood.

"I wish I could return the compliment, Pidge," she said with affectionate anxiety, "but you are looking

decidedly dicky. You want a good bracing up here. I shall tell Gwendolen so when I see her."

Tyrconnel frowned.

"Everybody keeps telling me that I am at death's door," he growled.

"That's all rot," said Coryton, who knew exactly how to manage his ex-charge. "All he wants is a little lunch and, for the matter of that, so do we. Look here, Vixie, take him up to the Grand and order lunch. I'll join you in half an hour. I've a few things to attend to. If you'd only wired you were coming, old man, I'd have arranged to be at your disposal all day."

While the two others slowly made their way up to the Grand Hotel, Tyrconnel complaining grievously of the heat all the while, Coryton hastily made his way into the casino and scrutinized all the players at the various tables. Gaverigan was at the first table, in the highest spirits, evidently winning heavily. He called out blithely to Coryton to join him as there was an unheard-of run on the *tiers du cylindre*, but Coryton passed on with a smiling shake of the head. At the next table he paused a moment to watch Williams and Wilmot, who were playing a system, as he had special reasons for wishing to know the state of their finances. He exchanged amenities with Signor Miauli, of Stratford-atte-Bowe, the popular tenor, whom he found staking 100 francs gold bits profusely on the *transversales* from behind Miss Gussie Gutter's chair. That young lady called out gaily to Coryton to come and bring her luck, but he only shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly and passed on to the trente-et-quarante room. Here Lord Pimlico and Miss Theodora Gargoyle were engaged in a fierce wrangle about the fetlocks of a horse called Saucisson, who had won the Grand Prix de Monte Carlo at Nice, and both appealed to him for corroboration.

They were more difficult to shake off than the rest, but at last he managed to escape and, after one more careful look all round, he made his way into the reading-room, which in those days was downstairs, in a last vain hope of meeting the object of his search.

There she was, curled up in a huge arm-chair about three sizes too large for her, voraciously reading the *Vie Parisienne*, or rather its pictures.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" she exclaimed, scarcely looking up as he entered. "Come and explain this bathing-costume to me."

"I am very angry with you, Sally," he replied. "You have wasted my time when every moment is of importance. You said you'd be inside from twelve to one. Why weren't you there?"

"Because I'm broke, if you want to know. But I shouldn't advise your trying to bully me. It's no go," she added with a comic attempt at despair.

"All right," he returned, making a motion as if to go away, "it doesn't matter. I had some news for you, but no doubt it will keep."

"Oh! you dear," she said, slapping him on the shoulder and beginning to twist her parasol in a restless way. "Tell me all about it as fast as you can."

"It's only that Tyrconnel's here," he said quietly.

Sally jumped to her feet in a fury and made as though she was off at once.

"Where? where?" she cried excitedly, "I'll have at him, the villain! Show me where he is this very moment."

"Hush! hush! All in good time. I'll arrange for you to interview him in the course of the day. You must first make up your mind what you are going to say to him."

"I've decided that long ago. I shall go up to him and slap his face or scratch his eyes or something. See what he had the insolence to send me."

And she held up a note in Tyrconnel's big sprawling hand.

"In answer to your letter of yesterday, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"May I see it? . . . 'Madam.'—Come that's pretty stiff!—'Although I do not admit that you have any claim whatever upon me, I am willing to send you £10, as you say you are in distress. I advise you to use it to leave Monte Carlo at once, as I warn you this is the last time I can consent to assist you. Should you

write again, your letters will be returned unopened. Yours faithfully, WILFRID TYRCONNEL. Well, at any rate you've got something in black and white, that may come in useful by and by."

"Yes, but a tenner!" screamed Sally with all the scorn of a millionaire. "Did you ever hear of anything so mean in your life? I took it in this morning and planked it down on 16 to 21 and it was swept off the first go. So now I haven't got sixpence to bless myself with."

"Well, you certainly won't get any more if you go and scratch his face. If you promise me not to be silly, I'll try and arrange for you to have a talk with him for a quarter of an hour or so before he goes back to Cannes, and if you don't get what you want then, I've got a much better card up my sleeve for you. Now I must run off to lunch."

"Wait a bit. You might explain it first. I don't trust you an inch further than I can see you. You made a fool of me once before. I'm not going to risk it's happening again."

"Little unbeliever! I've a great mind to let you fend for yourself. A fat lot of gratitude I get for all the trouble I take on your account. However, since you are so anxious to know, I couldn't think of disappointing a lady."

Sally put out her tongue, screwing up her nose so as to display her dazzling little rabbit's teeth. But he pretended not to see and gave her a hasty outline of the plan of campaign he proposed for her. She listened with her head on one side in a picturesque way, smiling incredulously all the while. When he had finished, she said roguishly,

"Yes, and where do you come in?"

"I!" he exclaimed, raising his eyebrows, as if that were a too preposterous suggestion. "It's not my affair. I shall be more than rewarded if Miss de Vere deigns to approve of her humble slave's efforts on her behalf."

Sally gave a shrill, derisive laugh, but beamed with pleasure all over her face, for no compliment ever came amiss to her.

"You are a downright humbug," she said amiably, as he was making his way to the door, "but somehow I can't help liking you."

Coryton made a deep mock bow and hurried out.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PLUCKING OF THE PIGEON.

Every one is as God made him and oftentimes a great deal worse.
—SIR EDWARD COKE.

WHEN Coryton reached the Grand Hôtel he found lunch just being served.

"We knew you wouldn't like us to wait, and have these good things spoiled," said Violet as he came in. "I think you'll be pleased with what we've ordered."

They were all three very proud of their knowledge of good food and certainly the arts of the *cordon bleu* at the Grand were not thrown away upon them. A very savory *consommé*, clear as liquid amber, put them all in excellent humor from the beginning. It was followed by *coquillis de turbot*, dressed with not too much cheese, but just cheese flavoring enough. Then came quails *en casserole* and a salad such as Charles, the head-waiter, always mixed specially for Coryton. He "showed a piece of bread to some garlic," as he phrased it, then stirred the bread up vigorously with the lettuce and took it out before serving. Violet always declared this gave you all the naughty feelings of eating garlic, without making it impossible to kiss anybody afterwards for at least twenty-four hours. A *mousse aux framboises* was also appreciated, for they were all sweet-tooths, and they wound up with Turkish coffee. During the meal they drank a pint of Johannisberg with the fish and a bottle of Mouton Rothschild 1874 with

the quails. Then *eau-de-vie de Danzig* as a *chasse-café* before strolling down to the gambling-rooms.

They played together in the rooms for some time and then Violet left them for the concert, as she was especially anxious not to miss Saint-Saëns's "Danse Macabre." It always sounds so weird and impressive in the big, dim, fantastic concert-room, which seems more in harmony with that piece than almost any other place.

"You can almost see the goblins skipping along the edge of the stage as the violins go 'Ping! Ping! Ping!'" she said. "And the double-shuffle of the dwarf devils, who form the chorus, is amazingly creepy. You really ought to come and hear it, Wilfrid, instead of staying here to lose money."

"The Pigeon's got the roulette-devil to tackle," said Coryton, making signs to his wife not to press her suggestion. "That's about as much as he can manage without running after your blue devils too."

So Coryton and Tyrconnel remained playing side by side at the *trente-et-quarante* table. The former had long ago come to the conclusion that nobody but a millionaire can win against the bank at Monte-Carlo, and he never played save with an ulterior object. Now he sat with a little pile of gold in front of him, making a great display of interest, pricking each announcement of the winning color diligently on one of the ruled cards provided by the administration; but all the while he never staked more than the minimum of a louis at a time, and that not every coup. At the end of an hour and a half he was three louis to the good and announced that he had had enough of it, and that it was not worth all those emotions to win such a small sum.

His companion had been plunging heavily, having begun with five hundred francs at a time and increased his stakes as he won. After an hour's play he was taking maximums every time and had a goodly pile of notes in front of him. Happening to look up just then, he noticed a very malevolent little face scowling at him from behind the croupier opposite.

"Heavens!" he growled to himself. "Am I never

to be free from this haunting curse of my old indiscretion? Am I doomed to have my path crossed by this vile woman every time I go out of doors?"

He grew very impatient and began to play recklessly. He argued with himself that he had known Sally was at Monte Carlo and that, if he could not stand seeing her, he ought not to have come. But it was all in vain. A blight seemed to have come over him and smothered all the joyousness of the good-humor that had buoyed him up; he had taken all the sweetness even out of the incomparable pleasure of a run of luck. It was now fast turning into an avalanche of disaster, this run of luck. Sally's malevolent gaze was upon him and seemed to cast a spell, so that he could do nothing right. Nobody but a gambler can have any idea how rapidly a big pile of big bank-notes will vanish, if only you have lost your head and are playing recklessly.

By the time that Coryton had turned round and announced his intention of stopping, content with his meagre gains, the pile had melted away and Tyrconnel was left with one solitary thousand franc note, which he tossed gloomily upon red.

"*Un après!*" the croupier announced.

Tyrconnel gave a gesture of impatience, as he saw his last note swept on to the line to denote that it was "in prison" and the impatience was heightened to indignation, as he saw a mocking smile light up Sally's provokingly childish face. The cards were dealt out again.

"*Neuf,*" said the croupier, announcing a heavy point for black.

Tyrconnel gave a faint smile of hope at the imminent prospect of getting back his last note. It would be the turning point and he would have another run of good luck, if only to spite Sally. While he was building these castles in the air, the cards had been dealt and there was a whisper of vexation half way round the table. They were four court cards for red!

"*Quarante,*" said the croupier mechanically; "*rouge perd, couleur gagne.*" And a long rake came down and whisked off Tyrconnel's last note.

"Well," he said, with an affectation of indifference, "I suppose I must go round to Smith's for some more money. I am absolutely stony now." Whereupon he got up and went slowly out of the room with Coryton, studiously avoiding Sally's gaze as he did so.

Tyrconnel was well known at the bank and had no difficulty in cashing all the checks he required. As they walked back to the rooms, Coryton put his arm affectionately through Tyrconnel's and said in his most caressing, confidential manner,

"Old man, I want to speak to you on a rather delicate matter, but I want you to promise me you won't be offended."

Tyrconnel promised, as one does on such occasions, without enthusiasm.

"It's about Sally Popkins. She tells me you sent her a tenner."

Tyrconnel started at the mention of the name and then flushed up resentfully as Coryton entered into details.

"Well?" he said, shaking himself free and looking Coryton full in the eyes.

"I think you are rather hard on her," he replied. "After all, you cannot divest yourself of some responsibility for her present position."

"Oh! come now," he exclaimed hotly, "that is rather a large order. She was not precisely a type of innocence when I first made her acquaintance. That Cottenham dinner was the beginning and end of it all, as far as I am concerned. What possible claim could she have upon me now?"

"If you don't think she has, it is not for me to interfere. I certainly never expected that you would be mean."

"Mean! I never was called mean before. Now tell me candidly, do you think I am in any way responsible? Come, now, as a man of the world."

"Every one of her admirers might disclaim responsibility in the same way. However, I will say no more. It is no concern of mine and I certainly don't want to quarrel with you about Sally Popkins."

They had reached the casino entrance, but Tyrconnel led the way round the building towards the terrace without a word.

After a silence of some minutes, he said abruptly,

"Corry, if you think I owe the girl any reparation, I will send her money, but nothing shall induce me to speak to her again."

"That's my good Pigeon," said Coryton patronizingly. "I knew you would. You know me well enough to be sure that I would not advise you to do anything quixotic or unnecessary. But the fact is, the girl isn't the reprobate you have been inclined to take her for, and I know that, if she were given a chance, she would ask nothing better than to keep straight in future. The difficulty always is that, when women start on that—line of country, they never get a chance of pulling up; they never have savings, no one would think of giving them honest employment, and they have no choice but to go on as they have begun. Now if I could raise a hundred or so for her, I could get her started as a florist in Belgravia, where she would have an opportunity of making a good thing of it and, as she would have the comforts she has got accustomed to, there would be less danger of her relapsing to her old ways. I think that is wiser than encouraging her to go back on the stage, don't you?"

Tyrconnel looked Coryton full in the face long and thoughtfully.

"You are a kind-hearted chap, Corry," he said as they leaned against the parapet of the terrace, watching a pigeon flutter out of its trap and then roll over and over in the dust, as a gun flashed out.

The most picturesque part of the scene was the retriever that ran out at once and marched back triumphantly, with tail erect, carrying the dead bird in its mouth, while a man in a wonderful sort of Robin Hood costume trotted out at the double to refill the trap. There were a series of paths worn away in the turf from his starting-point to each of the pigeon-traps, showing how equally the law of averages operated in the frequency with which they were opened.

"I have always said you weren't half so cynical

you try to make yourself out," Tyrconnel pursued. "Of course I will help about the poor girl and I am sure I ought to be much obliged to you for letting me know the real facts of the case. She wrote and asked me to help her to leave Monte Carlo and I sent her a tenner for that purpose, fully imagining all the same that she intended to blow it away at the tables. How much do you say you want for her? Here are five thousand francs."

And he held out some notes. But Coryton made no sign of taking them.

"Won't you give them to her yourself?" he asked. "I am sure she would value them a great deal more, and it would be an excellent opportunity for offering her a little good advice."

"No, no, my dear fellow, I couldn't. Do me this favor. I shall be most awfully obliged. Here, take them. . . . And now let's talk of something else."

"I am sure you will never repent this good action," said Coryton, pocketing the notes. "I daresay I shall get an opportunity of giving them to her in the rooms to-night."

The scene in the rooms after dinner was fast and furious. It seemed as if the players could not lose their money fast enough,—so hotly did they jostle and wrangle round the tables. Coryton was heartily sick of it all long before the announcement of the last three spins. But he had made up his mind to stay and see Tyrconnel off at the station by the *train des décavés*, which, so far as Tyrconnel was concerned, was appropriately named that day. He had needed to make a number of visits to Smith's bank in the course of the afternoon and was about £1,000 out on the day, besides what he had given Coryton for Sally. After the train was gone, Coryton made his way to the Café de Paris, where he found Sally seated at a little table drinking curaçoa and waiting for him by appointment.

She looked very fresh and desirable in her long seal-skin and dainty mauve skirt, with her face exquisitely made up and her feet resting on a neighboring chair so as to display a very smart pair of shoes and two

most neatly turned little ankles. So a cut-throat looking Roumanian boyard seemed to think, much to Sally's annoyance, which she was vainly trying to put into words when Coryton came up. The boyard bowed to Coryton and moved off in search of more promising conquests.

"What a long time you have been," exclaimed Sally petulantly. "I hope you bring me money in proportion."

"Alas! Sally," replied Coryton with mock contrition, "I did all I could. At first he wouldn't hear of doing anything. But I told him you were threatening to go to his wife——"

"And that fetched him, eh?"

"Not a bit of it. He only laughed and said you would never dare to do that, if you did, she would never believe you. Then I tried a different tack and said you were very anxious to reform and only wanted a little money to enable you to do so. I piled it on as thick as I could and really thought at one time I had got him. But after all he only gave me this for you." Coryton held out a note.

"What! only a 'sing-song.'* He is a mean brute. What's the use of a wretched £20, when I am dead broke, and in this hole of a place?"

Sally's voice trembled with emotion and for a moment it seemed as if she would give way to an outburst of passionate tears.

"But I'll be even with him yet. I'll go to his psalm-singing wife and tell her a tale that'll startle her, if it's only to spite him for being so infernally mean. Look here, Coryton, you are not a bad sort and I'm grateful to you for what you have done, though I'm pretty sure you wouldn't have done it, if it hadn't been to serve your own purposes."

"Odd that I should be forever misjudged in this way and thought incapable of any but the lowest motives," ejaculated Coryton with mock heroics.

"No, I don't say that," said Sally, taking his lamentations seriously. "You've always acted straight with

* Monte-Carlo Slang for 500 francs.

me and I like you better than the rest of them. But now I want you to give me a tip what to do—how to get away from here.”

“We must talk it over and that means something to drink,” replied Coryton rapping the table with his stick.

It was nearly a quarter to one when Coryton parted from his fair companion at the door of her hotel. He smiled to himself all the way up to the Grand, and all the way up to his rooms. There he found Violet in anything but a smiling mood.

“You have been talking to that woman again,” she said irritably.

“Yes, darling,” he replied in his ever-suave tones, “but to some purpose and for the last time. How did you get on at roulette?”

“I won twenty louis playing a very careful game and then I won thirty more from Shepheard at écarté after the rooms closed. So you see I have not been idle—which is just as well for you,” she added laughing, “or I shouldn’t be so amiable and forgiving to you.”

“You’ll be more forgiving still, when you hear what I’ve done,” he said. “I’ve made £180 on the day, but not by gambling.”

“Oh! do tell me how,” she said, clapping her hands childishly.

When he had related the events, she grew grave and made no remark for some time. Then she said in a sweet, low voice,

“It’s playing it rather low, isn’t it? But I am proud of you, for you are so clever and so thoughtful to me. Only I do wish we could afford to be honest. That is the luxury I covet most of all.”

He kissed her tenderly and said, “No doubt we shall be able to afford it some day. But we mastn’t be too extravagant all at once. If we are only patient, no doubt even honesty will one day be within our reach.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SERPENT IN THE EDEN.

Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth !—St. JAMES, iii. 5.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon: the day was scarce yet dying. It had been a perfect Riviera day, a day of blue sky, soft warm breezes, and sunny lambent air. One of those days—all too scarce even on the Riviera—which make one forget the fog and damp of Northern climes and turn with gladness to the sunshine and flowers of this favored portion of God's earth.

Gwendolen was sitting reading in their handsome salon on the first floor of the Hôtel Beau-site at Cannes. The windows, partly open to the sunny air, revealed glimpses of green palm trees, and of the broad blue of the tideless Mediterranean. The room was full of flowers—flowers everywhere—roses, bright-hued anemones, delicate feathery branches of mimosa, tulips, violets—all scattered about in prodigal confusion. On a table by her side stood a photograph of her husband smiling at her from out its velvet frame and before it, grouped like flowers before a shrine, was a low vase filled with white lilies. The piano was open, and on it was his favorite song—the one he loved to hear her sing best. She had been singing it a while ago and was still crooning over the fragment of some wordless melody as she read.

She had been alone all the afternoon. Wilfrid was gone over to Nice to pay a duty visit to some people there—friends of Lord Baltinglass. Gwendolen had half thought of going with him, but as they had been out together all the morning, she felt a little tired and,

at the last moment, he persuaded her to stay at home. She looked very fair and pure in a loose flowing gown of some soft creamy texture. A half-opened rosebud nestled among the laces of her throat. His lips had touched it before he placed it there; its faint fragrance recalled him to her now, and brought up the happy smile which was playing around her lips.

Gwendolen was very happy just now, with that calm serene happiness, which one often sees in women of her type. Since her husband had broken away from her that Sunday evening and had followed up his revolt by the trip to Monte Carlo, there had been no more differences between them. A change had come over the spirit of her dream. The masterful tones in which he had resented her interference, made her love him in secret the more. His scornful words, "Who made you a ruler and a judge?" rang in her ears all the next day. She had been too hasty, too precipitate, she said to herself. She had taken too much upon herself, pressed him too hard, she had not made sufficient allowance for his emotional nature; the old Adam would not die in a day, Satan was making a strong fight. But she would win—yes, she would win. The light of a holy enthusiasm lit up her face. But how? Wilfrid's was a nature to be led, not driven, henceforth she would lead him by the golden chain of love, not drive him with hard words or cram him with Scriptural texts. She must change her tactics.

So when he came back from Monte Carlo that night, rather down in the mouth and fully expecting a lecture, she greeted him to his surprise with kisses and loving words. Not a word of reproach did she utter; she even hoped that he had "spent a pleasant day," and she heaped coals of fire upon his head by turning up at breakfast the next morning, fresh and smiling, full of solicitude for his health and of plans for their mutual happiness.

Tyrconnel was full of delight and surprise at this sudden change. He met her advances graciously and down in his heart he laid a flattering unction to his soul. "That comes of showing a woman who is master," he said to himself. All his irritability and

ill-humor vanished and his love for his wife revived again under the sunshine of her smiles. He felt a little ashamed of himself too; he had not been quite frank with her. That scene with Sally still rankled in his memory—however that was all settled now, thank goodness—Coryton would see to that; and she would trouble him no more. In this new mood his wife became to him infinitely dearer, infinitely more lovable. When he thought of going to Monte Carlo again, she offered no objection; but things became so pleasant at home that he gradually ceased to wish to go there at all. Perfect harmony was restored between them, into their waning honeymoon there came a sort of St. Martin's summer, an after-glow of love. The young wife sometimes blamed herself for being so happy. Surely it was sinful to fix her affections thus on any earthly object. But young love is strong and young love is thoughtless. After all, she was but a woman and she loved—and human nature is much the same,—whether it be the saint's or the sinner's.

Thus had drifted on the golden, sunny days, the present all, the joy of loving enough.

Gwendolen glanced at the time-piece. It was only a little past four! He would not be back for some time yet. She felt inclined to scold laggard Time because he went not with swifter feet.

"A visitor for Madame," said the waiter, entering the room with the noiseless step of the well-trained Swiss. "Does Madame receive?"

Gwendolen took the card from the salver and looked at it with languid curiosity. It was a small, oblong card, shaped like a man's, but on it was inscribed Miss de Vere, Alpha Cottage, Beta Road, St. John's Wood. Neither the name nor the address conveyed any meaning to the innocent Gwendolen. She regarded the card with a puzzled air.

"There must be some mistake," she said. "I do not know the lady."

"There is no mistake, Madame," replied the waiter impassively. "The lady asked especially for the Honorable Mrs. Tyrconnel, and if you were engaged she would wait, she said."

Gwendolen's first impulse was to refuse; then she looked at the time-piece again. It would be a long time before Wilfrid came home. She was more than wearied of her own society. Perhaps, too, it was a little spice of feminine curiosity which prompted her to say:

"I will see her; ask her to come up."

The waiter bowed and withdrew, presently reappearing to announce "Miss de Vere."

Sally entered with a timid, hesitating step. She was got up for the part with some skill. She had donned an old black dress and quite a shabby hat; her face was absolutely innocent of rouge, though there might have been a suspicion of *blanc de perles*. Her fringe was out of curl; her eyes were cast down sadly on the floor.

"The Honorable Mrs. Tyrconnel?" she said interrogatively when the waiter had closed the door.

"Yes, I am Mrs. Tyrconnel," answered Gwendolen kindly. "Pray be seated and tell me what I can do for you."

She looked very nervous, this poor little thing; perhaps she was a teacher of English, a governess, or something of the kind, who wanted befriending in a foreign land. And yet—she did not look quite like a governess; Gwendolen had had no experience of young women of Sally's type, either with their war-paint on, or without. She was as innocent as a child. Sally eyed her doubtfully. She had not come prepared for this gracious greeting. She had understood from Mr. Coryton that young Mrs. Tyrconnel was a very religious person, and religion in Sally's mind was associated with straight-backed spinsters and aggressive matrons, withering looks, frigid words and a sort of "do-not-contaminate-me" manner. If she had been received in this way, she had a retort ready to hand; she would have been easy enough. As it was, she felt a little nonplussed. She looked about her in a helpless sort of way, not knowing how to begin.

"Pray tell me what I can do for you," said Gwendolen encouragingly.

Sally's eyes wandered around the room until they

fell upon the photograph of Tyrconnel. That nerved her. A gleam of resentment shone in her eyes. "There is no hatred like a woman scorned." The more concealed it is, the more dangerous is the venom, and in this instance the venom was prompted almost as much by resentment as by greed.

"I am very—very unhappy," she said, and burst into tears.

She could not have begun better. Gwendolen's sympathies were aroused in an instant. She got up from her chair and, coming across to where the other was sitting with bowed head, touched her on the shoulder.

"I am so sorry," she said gently, "tell me what your trouble is."

"I don't know how to tell you," whimpered Sally, rubbing her eyes the harder. "Oh dear!—oh dear!—to think it should have come to this."

Gwendolen looked perplexed at this somewhat irrelevant outburst. However, she waited patiently; she did not like to force a confidence. She saw that her visitor was in trouble, and like most amateur philanthropists, she had no power to distinguish between the genuine and the false. Here was an opportunity for her to translate into practice some of her beautiful theories. Meanwhile the astute little actress went on sniffing behind her pocket-handkerchief.

"Come, tell me what your trouble is about," said Gwendolen presently. Then she added in a tone of apology for her words, "You see, I cannot help you until I know."

"What is it about?" echoed Sally—"Ah! I forgot—you know nothing." Then with a tragic gesture towards the photograph, "It's about *him*!"

Gwendolen looked in the direction indicated in silent astonishment. Had this young person taken leave of her senses? Perhaps she referred to some unknown "him." But no, one of Sally's hands covered her eyes, the other pointed an accusing forefinger straight at Wilfrid's photograph.

"My husband," said Gwendolen vaguely. "Surely there must be some mistake." Then a sudden fear

rushed over her, her heart leaped to her mouth. "Tell me," she cried, "is it bad news? Has anything happened to him?—Oh! tell me quickly—quickly, I can bear anything but the suspense."

"Him," said Sally scornfully. "Oh! nothing has happened to him that I know of—he's right enough, you may be sure. It is what has happened to me. Oh dear!—Oh dear!" she went on, rocking herself to and fro. "You think I should live to see this day. You, his wife, and I—nothing—nothing."

Her simulated sobs broke forth afresh.

Gwendolen drew herself proudly up and moved a little distance off.

"What do you mean?" she said coldly, with a gesture that a Roman matron might have envied.

"There!" said Sally brokenly, "I might have known it!—I might have known how you would have taken it. You are like all the rest. It is always the poor girl who suffers. She is always blamed, trampled on, despised, while the man goes scot-free."

"I do not understand you," said Gwendolen, growing pale to the lips. "My ideas of right and wrong are the same in the case of both men and women. But I do not know what you mean—to what you refer. My husband is nothing—can be nothing—to you, nor you to him—nothing," she added with strained insistence.

"Nothing—nothing now," repeated Sally sadly, the corners of her baby-mouth drooping again. "Ah! that is the pity of it. And yet once he vowed by all the vows. Ah! me—I had better die."

So might Marguerite have spoken of her betrayal.

Gwendolen looked at her with astonishment and indignation. A passionate denial rose to her lips. She moved towards the bell. But as she did so, some faint chord in her memory vibrated again. Where had she seen that face before?—Ah! she remembered.

"Tell me," she said quickly, "were you not at Henley?"

"Yes," replied Sally in the same mournful cadence, noting the change of purpose nevertheless. ("Meant to turn me out, did she?" she thought to herself.)

"Yes—I am not likely to forget it. I passed you on the river. He looked at me as if I was dirt. You and he were sitting together in a boat beneath the alder-trees."

Gwendolen bowed her head to hide the vague dread in her eyes. Little links pieced themselves together in her chain of memory. The look she had noticed on the girl's face that day, Wilfrid's confusion, his evasive answer to her query—all rushed before her again. She put her hand to her throat, something hurt her there What mystery was this? What did it mean? Into the sunshine of her young love there stole the shadow of distrust.

From behind her pocket-handkerchief Sally noted everything. She was quick to follow up the advantage she had gained.

"I was only a poor ignorant girl," she continued in the same melancholy monotone, "and he a gentleman born. I did wrong of course, but then I was so young—and I loved him—not wisely, but too well." (She remembered this phrase in some play she had acted in.) "I gave up everything for him—then I was cast off, ruined, thrown aside like an old shoe—and in those days at Cambridge I thought—fool that I was—that he loved me."

Gwendolen staggered back and put her hand on the table for support. As she did so, the photograph fell with a crash to the floor. It lay there unheeded. Her breath was coming in short quick beats, her eyes were wide with horror.

"At Cambridge!" she gasped.

"Yes," said Sally, warming to her part, "Oh! how I wish I had never heard of the place, I was innocent till I went there. I went at first with *My Sweetheart* Company. I was earning £10 a week," (as a matter of fact she had never earned more than £4 even in the ante-Pimlico days,) "and I should be now, if only I hadn't been led astray. I was at Cambridge off and on, after that—after I met him—whenever he wanted me to go. Last time I was there was February year. 'Twas about me he got sent down." And then, noticing the flash of indignation, which spread itself

over her listener's face, she changed her tack. "Oh dear,—Oh dear," she wailed, "if my poor mother could but see me now!"

She burst into tears once more.

Gwendolen tried to speak, but could not—tried to think, but could not. The thought that her husband—the man she loved, should have been linked with this low intrigue stunned her. She felt degraded, ashamed. Her purity, her outraged love were both in arms. She recoiled in disgust—the thing was monstrous, incredible. She turned on Sally with sudden scorn.

"How dare you—how dare you!" she cried. "*My husband!* I do not believe you—I *will* not."

It was then that Sally rose to her greatest height. Had she been a less accomplished actress, a less consummate hypocrite, she would have met Gwendolen's scorn with words as angry as her own. But she saw that her disbelief was only half-hearted, that she was struggling against her growing convictions. She met her angry gaze with sorrowful eyes, with an air of injured innocence.

"In that case there is nothing more to be said," she answered in a broken despairing kind of way, rising from her chair as she spoke. "I might have known it all along: it is the poor girl who always suffers. That is what he said—'Who will believe you?' He was right. I had better go——"

She made as though to go to the door, moving with feeble uncertain steps. All the same she fully meant to turn back if Gwendolen didn't stop her.

But Gwendolen did. Her anger died away as she looked at the bowed figure and listened to those unresentful hopeless words. After all, the poor girl was probably more sinned against than sinning. In her divine charity, she was willing to make every allowance for this penitent Magdalene—this weak erring sister, the victim of man's selfish passion. The very way in which she had met her anger brought conviction with it. The cold, sick fear tightened itself around her heart. She laid an arresting hand on the other's arm.

"Forgive me," she said, mastering herself with an

effort. "I was too hasty—perhaps. I will hear all you have to say—do you hear me, all. Let me know the worst."

Then Sally told, falsifying facts, putting her own gloss upon everything, representing herself as the tempted, Tyrconnel as the tempter; she the betrayed, he the betrayer; he had ruined her, abandoned her, wrecked her life. Yet she was careful always to speak of him more in sorrow than in anger. Of course she magnified the Cambridge incident out of all its true proportions, and upon this slender foundation of fact she reared a whole edifice of falsehood. It was just this substratum of truth which made the lie so difficult to detect.

Gwendolen listened in silence, keeping mastery over herself by a tremendous effort. All the warm sweetness of her young love turned to gall as she listened. Her innocence made her a dupe to this plausible tale; her purity made her hard and cold towards her husband. She had high ideals, this young bride. She did not see things as the world sees them. What to some might have appeared an indiscretion of hot-headed youth, was to her a deadly sin, the very thought of which filled her with loathing, not only towards the sin but towards the sinner. And then the treachery of it all. He had pretended to tell her everything,—all the weaknesses, all the follies of his life and she had forgiven everything as freely as she hoped to be forgiven. This, then, was the true reason of his having been sent down from Cambridge; until now, the punishment had always seemed to her disproportionate to the offence. What!—he must have left her that very night, when she promised to become his wife, and have gone a few days after, perhaps the very same night to this woman, gone with her love-words still ringing in his ears and with her kisses still warm upon his lips. The thought was torture—she bowed her head in shame—shame for herself, shame for him.

Sally finished her narrative at last and sat silent, watching furtively her victim's face to see how the poison worked. She could glean little from that down-turned face; it was cold as marble, impassive as the

Sphinx. No one would have known the tumult which was going on within. Yet even as she looked, a faint change broke over it. It might not be true. Gwendolen caught at the hope, as a drowning man catches at a straw.

"What proof have you of all this?" she asked, lifting her head suddenly.

"Proof!" echoed Sally with quivering lips, "proof enough. You can easily find out. Every one knows—ask Pin—ahem! I mean ask Lord Pinlico—ask Mr. Coryton—though they would not like to tell tales against their *friend*," she added with emphasis. "Find out why he was sent down from Cambridge. But here," producing the letter which Tyrconnel had weakly written to her in answer to her urgent appeal—"this, I had from him only the other day—would he be likely to write to me, think you—unless there was a reason for it. Here, read it,"—handing her the letter.

This was another stroke of Sally's genius. She knew the chances were ten to one against Gwendolen's reading the letter. She had gauged her character to a certain extent.

Gwendolen took the letter with a hand which trembled in spite of herself. Yes—the writing on the envelope was in Wilfrid's big sprawling hand. She had seen enough. She gave it back with a proud gesture.

"It is not meant for me to read," she said. "I—I will ask him myself—and now leave me, pray leave me. I wish to be alone."

Yes, she wished to be alone, to think, poor soul, to try and grasp the full horror of this revelation. She did not speak unkindly—there was pity in her face as she turned it towards her companion. Yet she could not help an involuntary recoil. Moments of intense joy or sorrow illumine the character as nothing else can. This moment of anguish revealed Gwendolen, just—but cold and hard.

Sally looked somewhat blank at this unceremonious *conge*. It hardly suited her purpose that the interview should terminate like this. Instead of moving, she began to weep again.

"Go!"—she echoed despairingly. "Where am I to go to without money, without friends? The bottom of the sea is the only place for me. He won't help me—he who brought all this trouble upon me, and I—I—am penniless," she whimpered through her tears.

"Penniless!" echoed Gwendolen with astonishment. There was a lower depth still. The man she called husband was not only profligate but mean. But that struck her as so utterly foreign to his character that a faint suspicion stole over her again.

"How did you manage to come out to the Riviera then?" she asked.

Sally hung her head.

"Don't ask me?" she said in a low voice. "Such things are not for your ears—I have sunk lower and lower since I left Cambridge—since I lost my innocence. There are plenty of temptations for a poor girl like me. But I am tired of it all—I want to lead a good life—that is all I want, a little money to start me. Without it I cannot—I must live."

Gwendolen shuddered. A great rush of pity swept over her, as she looked at the little figure in the shabby black dress. Who was she that she should judge her—her husband's victim, ignorant, illiterate, her very beauty a snare? She had never had a fair chance. How selfish men were, how gross, how brutal! This poor creature had not only been betrayed but abandoned, thrown aside like a broken toy—and her betrayer—God help her! was her husband.

"Penniless!" said Gwendolen again. Then she arose and went over to her desk. There was a roll of bank-notes in it, which Wilfrid had given her only the other day for sundry bills and expenses; there was money also which her father had pressed upon her. She took it all,—all save two bank-notes which she kept back in an afterthought. She thrust the notes and gold in Sally's hands.

"Here," she said hurriedly. "Take this—take this—and may God in His mercy guard you and help you to lead a better life. And now—do not think me unkind—go I *implore* you—go—I must be alone."

She almost pushed the astonished Sally out of the room and closed the door upon her.

“Well, I never!” said Sally to herself as she tripped down the stairs, “if ever I see such a woman in all my life. That’s a good job over and done with any way. Why, there must be nigh upon £200 here if there’s a penny! He’ll get a bad quarter of an hour when he comes home. . . . How well she took it too,—so quiet-like. I hope I didn’t hurt her feelings more than I was obliged to. But there, I don’t suppose she cares much about him.”

From which it may be gathered that women of Gwendolen’s type did not altogether come within the range of Sally’s mental vision.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FLIGHT.

The prejudices of men emanate from the mind, and may be overcome; the prejudices of women emanate from the heart, and are impregnable.—D’ARGENS.

GWENDOLEN was alone at last! She looked around her in a bewildered way. She could hardly realize it yet. The flowers and the light seemed to mock her. She passed into the inner room and, throwing herself face downward on the bed, lay there, trying to think, trying to nerve herself for the task which lay before her.

Now and again a faint flicker of hope awoke within her; it might not be true—and yet—and yet—the different parts of the story, dovetailed in with one another so well. Surely no woman would thus lie away her honor? Ah no! It must be true. Wounded love and wounded pride strove together in Gwendolen’s heart. And to these was added the horror of the sin. Her standard of morality was a high one. She knew

no distinction in the moral code between the man and the woman. In her eyes the fall from purity in the one was as great as the fall in the other. Her feelings were in fact just what her husband's would have been, had a similar tale been told to him of his wife—only he would have disbelieved: she believed.

She lay there battling with the anguish in her soul. Only an hour ago, and her life was full of light and love and happiness. Now it was stripped and bare! She was alone. The brief day faded and died, the gloaming came; but still she lay there, praying for guidance, thinking—thinking—thinking. Her thoughts all brought her round to the same point. If the story were true—then she and her husband must part.

At last there smote on her ears the sound of an opening door.

"Gwendolen," came her husband's eager voice through the shadows, "Gwendolen!"

But a few hours ago, how she would have welcomed him, how she would have thrown her arms around his neck in eager rapture, scolding him playfully for having tarried so long away from her! Now she confronted him in the waning light, stern and cold as an accusing angel. The struggle she had been through had left its mark upon her. Her face was white and drawn, deep lines had cut themselves across her brow, and around the corners of her mouth. In her eyes there was a look Tyrconnel had never seen before.

"Gwendolen, dear one," he cried in alarm, coming towards her. "What is the matter? Are you ill?"

He would have taken her in his arms, but she waved him off.

"Tell me," she said in a low intense voice, ignoring his question, "Tell me, is this vile thing true?"

"What thing?" he asked in astonishment. "What on earth do you mean? Why do you look at me like this?"

"This will explain," she answered briefly and she held out to him Sally's card, which until now had been clutched in her hand. "Does this convey any meaning to you?"

Tyrconnel took it wonderingly. As he read the name a great revulsion of feeling swept over him. He drew back involuntarily; his breathing became more labored, the hectic spot burned on his cheek again. His hands grew moist. The serpent had penetrated his Eden. This then was the meaning of Sally's scarce-veiled threat in the begging-letter she had written to him. She had been here with some false lying tale, poisoning his wife's mind against him. Curse her! Curse her!

He trembled with impotent rage. The hacking cough came on again. In his agitation he could not stop it.

Gwendolen noticed his hesitation, his flushed face, his trembling hands. Her heart sank within her. To her mind these were so many signs of guilt.

"Does this woman's name convey any meaning to you?" she asked again. Her voice was cold and stern. Then suddenly a little break came in it. "Oh! Wilfrid, why do you not speak? Say it does not—say it does not—"

"It conveys to me," he said in a voice thick with anger, "the name of a bad designing woman, who has dared—dared to force herself into your presence—How dare she do this thing?"

Gwendolen recoiled a step. He knew her. Until now she had hoped faintly—ever so faintly—that he would deny all knowledge of her and her works.

"Need makes one greatly daring," she said bitterly. "You know this woman then. She has told me all—all—do you understand? Answer me, is it true or false?"

"I have told you I know the woman," he said a little impatiently, "and that she is a bad woman—not fit for you to speak to—even to talk about. What has she told you? If you will explain more fully, perhaps I may understand you. At present I confess your meaning is beyond me. What is it you wish to know?"

"Is it true?" she asked again, "that you sinned against her—Is it true or false?"

A red flush burned itself on Tyrconnel's face. The

memory of that one false step, of that past slip—in which he was more sinned against than sinning, rose up before him.

"Gwendolen," he faltered, "you do not understand. I——"

She interrupted him with a passionate gesture. In his hesitation she read the confirmation of her worst fears.

"I understand," she said, "but too well. I ask you a plain question, I want a plain answer—Yes or no?"

He looked at her hopelessly. He knew what she was like in these moods—to reason with her was impossible. How could he make her understand? Her very purity, her innocence, fought against him. The repented sin rose up and confronted him in all its hideousness. Surely he had suffered enough for it already.

"Answer me yes or no," she pleaded. "Oh! Wilfrid, if you love me—if you have ever loved me, deny this thing. I cannot bear it."

She covered her face with her hands.

Her grief touched him far more than her anger had done. His heart ached to wound her so.

"Gwendolen," he said despairingly—"How can I explain to you—innocent as you are about such things. I was guilty of folly—of weakness, I was tempted and I fell—I was not myself—I——"

She staggered back against a chair, her hands fell from her face, she looked at him with eyes wide with repulsion. This was his excuse then; like Adam in the garden. . . . "*The woman tempted me.*" Faugh!

"Then it is true," she whispered. "You have betrayed her and deceived me?"

This assumption of his guilt, this sweeping condemnation of his error, was a little too much for Tyreconnel. He was quite prepared to admit that he had done wrong, but not that it was so bad as this. They were to a certain extent at cross purposes. She was thinking of the tissue of falsehood told her by Sally, he of that slip at Cambridge. But the element of fact common to both, made it the more difficult to distinguish between the true and the false.

"You are hard," he said, "hard and unjust. I do not wish to defend myself. There were extenuating circumstances—but I did wrong, I admit that. I ought to have told you perhaps—but how could I? It was to spare you that I did not. The thing is bad, but why magnify it out of all its true proportions? Surely you will not allow a little thing like this to——"

A wave of disgust swept over Gwendolen's face.

"A little thing," she echoed, "to you perhaps, but not to me—not to her. A wife deceived, a girl betrayed—a little thing! Is it a little thing to her—your victim? Nay, hear me out"—he was about to speak. "Are we women slaves, think you? to be used as you will, and then cast aside like broken toys? Why were you not frank with me? Had I known this, I would rather have died than have become your wife. You have deceived me and ruined her. You have wrecked both our lives."

Tyrconnel stood aghast at this torrent of reproach. He could not understand it. Allowing for the gloss Sally was sure to have put upon the story, allowing for the way in which purity, such as Gwendolen's, might have been expected to recoil from evil—surely there was nothing in it, even then, to merit this sweeping condemnation.

"You do not understand," he said again,—“there must be some mistake.”

"There is no mistake," she said sadly. A stubborn line cut itself around her mouth.

"But let me explain how it was that——"

She raised her head.

"God forbid! Do not pollute your lips nor my ears. I want neither explanation nor palliation. Besides, what difference would it make. You have admitted your guilt—No? No? Then I will frame my question another way—Was it on account of this woman that you were sent down from Cambridge?"

He hesitated for a moment, he resented the tone in which the question was put, more than the question itself. Argument and explanation seemed alike impossible to combat Gwendolen's prejudices. He was

truthful. She had better know the truth, and then be left to make the best of it.

"I cannot deny it—Yes," he said coldly.

She bowed her head with a low moan—her last atom of hope was gone; it was true then, this horrid thing which was poisoning her life.

He looked at her dumbly and cursed Sally again in his heart. He felt very miserable and a little angry too. It was natural perhaps that Gwendolen should feel it—but not that she should be so unreasonable as this. As the Archdeaconess used to say "Young men will be young men, and boys will be boys."

"You take things too seriously," he said, uttering his thoughts aloud.

She looked at him with a world of reproach in her great eyes.

"Too seriously! What would you think if I—I, your wife, had sinned so—and concealed from you my sin."

"Hush—hush!" he said more gently. The mere thought of such a thing in connection with Gwendolen seemed a profanation. "You do not understand, you are a woman, I am a man—that makes the difference."

"Are there then two codes of morality?" she asked with fine scorn, "one for woman, and one for man? Were two sets of commandments given on Sinai? Did Christ preach two Gospels? Not so. In the sight of God the sin is the same, be it man or woman."

"You are young and inexperienced," he said, "or you would not look at things in this light. In the eyes of the world—and you and I have to live in the world—the two cases are widely different."

"The world!" she replied, "What is the world to me? Did I not always tell you that the world was nothing to me—nothing."

"In the eyes of common-sense then," he said impatiently, a little wearied of the lengthened dialogue and with an uneasy consciousness that he was getting the worst of it. "I do not wish to argue with

you, it is useless to argue with an angry woman. As to my 'sin,' as you phrase it, I have told you that I am sorry—more sorry than I can say. Let that be the end of the matter. Whatever happened, it was before I was your husband. I have not failed in my duty since. Do not you fail in your duty to me now."

"My duty—Ah! what is my duty?" she queried more to herself than to him.

"Obedience," he returned almost roughly. "Are we not told somewhere that 'Obedience is Heaven's first law'—you know more about Heaven than I do,"—this was unkind—"I only know that it is certainly a wife's first duty to her husband. I have told you to let this subject drop, pray do so. In your calmer moments I am willing to explain to you fully, in your present mood it is useless to attempt to do so."

Gwendolen resented the tone; it seemed to add insult to injury. To dictate, to counsel, to argue, these had been her prerogatives. Now it seemed they were to be his. Their previous tiffs had been bad enough, but this was a more serious matter. She maintained a stubborn silence.

Her husband turned on his heel.

"This interview had better end," he said again.

"Yes," she said sadly, "I agree with you. And from to-night there must be an end of everything between you and me. In my own heart I know that I am nothing—can be nothing to you any more."

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed incredulously, arresting his steps.

She lifted her eyes to his. There was a distant look in them. Her words came like one who is repeating a lesson learned by rote.

"I mean that from to-night we are husband and wife in name only. You and I must part. To live with you would be to condone your sin. I see it all now. I doubt if we could have ever been really happy together; this has made it impossible. We must part."

"Part!" he cried, "you and I—really, Gwendolen—this is carrying it too far—you forget your duty to me—your husband."

"I have a higher duty still," she said solemnly—"my duty towards my God."

"This is too much," he cried angrily, goaded out of all patience by her reproaches. "You are as free with the name of the Deity as the German Emperor. I will waste words with you no longer. You are unforgiving, ungenerous, unjust. I will leave you to come to your senses. It is I who have been in error. I admit it. I thought you loved me and you do not, you have never really loved me, that is it. Had you done so, you would never have spoken to me as you have done to-night."

So saying, he turned and left her. . . .

Not love him! What then meant those streaming eyes—for tears had come to her relief at last—that gesture of abandonment, with which she threw herself on her knees before the bed—that exceedingly bitter cry which rose to her lips—"Oh God, help me to do right—help me to do right!"

But when she arose from her knees at last, a light shone in her eyes, clear and strong. It was the light, which shines on the face of one who has been through a fierce conflict and has come out the victor; of one who has resolved on a definite purpose, who knows no change, neither shadow of turning.

Meanwhile Tyrconnel had gone off in high dudgeon. He felt hurt, wounded, angry, all the more so because in his heart there was a lurking consciousness that he was in the wrong. He was prepared to admit it; he had admitted it—but that was no reason why his wife should exaggerate the offence in this way, refuse to hear his explanation, spurn his excuses, speak to him as though he were a criminal of the deepest dye.

Once more the sense of their inherent incompatibility of temperament was borne in upon him. How could he agree with a woman who looked at everything in such an uncompromising light, who seemed incapable of understanding the weaknesses and errors

of human nature, who was always in the right, never in the wrong, who was as pure and flawless as snow, and as cold. Such a one might be perfect to worship from a distance, but to live with—that was another thing. To-day she had shown herself hard, unforgiving—nay more, unjust. He would leave her to herself for a time, and meet her averted looks and cold words with words and looks as distant as her own. He had been too yielding to her—not firm enough, that was it. She must learn who was master.

Not for a moment did he think she would put her threat of leaving him into execution. He deemed it mere idle words uttered by an unreasonable woman, in a moment of anger. He had not forgotten their dispute about Monte Carlo. To-morrow, when a night had brought reflection and she realized that he meant to be firm, she would probably yield him that obedience which she had hitherto refused; if not, he must make the lesson harder. He had quite argued himself into believing that he was the aggrieved one by this time.

Full of doughty resolve, he dined alone—or rather he made a feint of eating his dinner. Hitherto he and Gwendolen had dined together in their private rooms—to-night he went down to the public dining-room and sat down at one of the little round tables. But it was dull work; he could not eat, he felt sick at heart. He passed most of the dishes untasted and, though he drank a good deal of wine, it did not seem to have much effect in rousing his drooping spirits. So after coffee and a cigarette, he lighted a cigar and went out for a stroll.

He walked some little distance, and then sat down on a bench. He felt strangely fatigued and overwrought, it was astonishing how little tired him now. He sat there a long time. It was an unwise thing to do, for the night was chilly and he had no overcoat—his cough was very troublesome. But no one cared, he thought to himself bitterly.

Was this the perfect happiness he had dreamed of—hungered after—thirsted for? Gwendolen was his wife; he had attained his soul's desire only to find, as

so many have found before, that, like Dead-Sea apples, the fruit of his longing had turned to ashes on his lips. This was—marriage.

The wind was cold, he shivered and buttoned his coat around him. Yet the wind bore on its breath the scent of orange-flowers and violets from the villa gardens hard by, and somehow or other the fragrance reminded him of Gwendolen—of Gwendolen as he had known her in the first hours of their married life—as he had known her again yesterday—known her but that morning—soft, gentle, yielding, basking in the sunshine of his smiles, full of love and caressing words. A sudden revulsion swept over him, the love within him stirred again. Poor Gwendolen! He had been too hard on her perhaps, he had not made sufficient allowance for her in the first shock of this revelation. He could not realize how a pure and innocent nature such as hers would recoil from the contact with evil. Poor Gwendolen! What was she doing now, he wondered? Was she as miserable and as lonely as he? He took out his watch and looked at it by the light of a match. Nearly ten o'clock! This was about the time she was wont to sing to him. When the singing was over, she would come and sit on a low stool at his feet, and lean her head against his knees—and they would talk together in the dim light, of all their hopes and plans in the new life which lay before them A great rush of shame and compunction swept over him, as his thoughts dwelt thus. His was all the blame, all the wrong. All thought of resentment and of domination passed away. He would go to her—go as a suppliant and tell her he was sorry for what had passed, and she—she would forgive him, and they would be happy once more.

Full of this new-born desire, he arose and walked quickly back to the hotel. He sprang up the stairs, three at a time. There was no one in the sitting-room. But the lamps were lighted, the coffee-tray was arranged on a little table by Gwendolen's chair, and by its side was a folded *Galignani*. On a chair were two or three unopened parcels, the fruits of

their morning's shopping There were too many flowers in the room, their odor seemed to stifle him He crossed over quickly to the door of Gwendolen's room and knocked. No answer came.

He knocked again.

"Gwendolen," he said, "Gwendolen! It is I—your husband."

There was no reply, neither was there any sound nor movement. An indefinable dread stole over Tyrconnel. What was the matter? Was she still angry with him?—Was she ill?—Was—ah God! not that!

He burst open the door and entered. His suspicion deepened to a certainty. No one was there. The room was in a state of confusion, drawers were pulled open, clothes scattered here and there—on the dressing-table lay, in a heap, the rings and jewels and trinkets he had given her.

As his eyes fell upon them, the truth flashed over him; he staggered backward with a groan.

Gwendolen had gone.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Be not righteous overmuch.—ECCLESIASTES.

THE 8.30 P. M. train from Liverpool Street steamed into the Cambridge station one wet gusty night. Among the passengers which it deposited was a sad, weary-looking woman.

It was Gwendolen. One would hardly have known her, as she stood on the cheerless platform looking after the red lights of the departing train, so changed was she. How altered that once happy face with its wild-rose bloom! How different that bowed, saddened woman from the smiling, blushing bride who had left this spot only a month or so ago!

Now her eyelids were swollen with weeping, her cheeks were colorless, her eyes lacked lustre. She was faint from lack of food, her limbs ached with fatigue, her head was dizzy from the rush and rattle of her ceaseless journey. As she stood there, a great rush of self-pity swept over her. This then was the end of her honeymoon, this her return home!

"Any luggage, ma'am?" asked a porter, touching his cap to the solitary figure standing beneath the flickering gas-light.

Gwendolen started from her reverie and pointed to her one small trunk—all that she had brought with her from the far-off southern land. Alas! how very far off it seemed to her now. She shivered slightly and gathered her mantle closer around her. Everything looked bare, cheerless, desolate, like her own wrecked life. All the warmth and sunshine she had left behind her in that land of love and flowers. Here there was nothing but mist and driving rain.

The porter shouldered her box and she followed him to the cab—an old musty four-wheeler, the only one available this rough night.

Not until the door was shut and she was being rattled along the road towards Newnham, did she realize what it was that she had done. For the first time in her headlong flight a faint shadow of doubt—not as to the course she had adopted, but as to the reception she would meet with—crossed her mind. Hitherto the bitter sense of injury, the need of having her wits about her, the very excitement of the journey had kept her up. It was a new experience to her that journey across Europe—to her who had never been allowed to travel alone even from Cambridge to London before. How she accomplished the journey she hardly knew. Looking back it seemed like some evil dream.

The moment her husband had left her she had begun to act upon her suddenly-formed resolution. She hastily packed the few things she needed most in one of the smallest of her trunks. Then she rang the bell, ordered a fly and drove to the station. The hotel-keeper was somewhat surprised, but he had lived too

long in the neighborhood of Monte Carlo to be very much astonished at the eccentricities of womankind. Madame was departing? *N'importe*. Monsieur remained, and he would pay the bill. So he bowed Gwendolen down the steps with an impassive countenance, and sent the hall-porter with her to the station to take her ticket, explain her route, and see her off.

Gwendolen travelled night and day. How the time passed she could not tell, she scarcely had any consciousness of her surroundings.

Now the journey was accomplished. But the worst was to come: the servant's scarce-concealed surprise. her aunt's shrill anger, and later on the world's sneers. All would have to be faced. Gwendolen's heart sank within her. In the first moment of her passionate indignation, when she threw the gauntlet down at her husband's feet, she had told him—and told him truly—that she cared nothing for the world. Brave words indeed! But it is one thing to despise the conventions, another to set them at defiance. And so Gwendolen was to find it.

But her purpose never swerved, her courage never really faltered. It is impossible for a worldling to understand the light in which this young girl, with her narrow views, her child-like faith, her Christ-like ideas, her passionless purity, viewed her husband's wrong-doing. There was the deceit practised on her, the wrong done—as she believed—to a confiding girl, and most of all there was his fall from purity. In this first horrible surprise, this sudden darkening of the dream of her young life, this clouding over of every hope, she felt she could not live with him. And yet she loved him! But she thrust away that love as sin—as an unholy thing. If she were to remain under the same roof with him, see his face, hear his voice, she knew that her weakness would conquer her, that she would condone his fall and in condoning it forget what she believed to be the higher instincts of her nature and become a partaker of his sin.—No, her only safety lay in flight, if she remained with him, her good resolutions would falter, her individuality would become merged in his.

In the wild desire to be away from him—in the shock of her shattered ideal, whither should she flee but to the home which had sheltered her, to the father who loved her? As she thought of him, the fear of her aunt's anger, the dread of the world's scorn faded away. A sense of great comfort stole over her. Her father! Never until now had the full sense of his protection, his love, his unwearying patience been borne in upon her. He had been ignored and set aside. But now in her anguish she turned naturally to him, the author of her being, the one who most loved her. He would shelter her, and would shield her from the world's cheap sneers; his love would make the stony way less rough, the upward path less thorny to her bleeding feet. Oh! How she longed to weep out her sorrows on his breast.

Every moment brought her nearer to him. The cab jolted down Mill Lane and over the bridge, the rain beating against the panes. They were under the great elms now, on the Backs. She pressed her face against the glass, but she could see little. Now they had turned in at the gate. She was at home.

Gwendolen got out and put her hand on the bell. She faltered a moment, uncertain, and looked up at the darkened house. How still everything was, how desolate. The house was all in darkness, save where a light burned dimly in an upper room. . . . it was her father's room. . . . A strange eerie feeling crept over her. She pulled the bell sharply. No one answered. What a long time they were in coming to be sure! She pulled again—Ah! here was some one coming at last. . . .

Why did the man look at her with that scared face? What was the vague, undefinable something which hung over all. A chill struck Gwendolen's heart.

"What is the matter?" she asked hurriedly. "Where is your master? I wish to see him at once."

"Oh! Lor', ma'am," said the servant, scared out of his senses at this unexpected apparition, and blurting out the truth with brutal suddenness. "Don't you know? Haven't you heard? Master's dead!"

"Dead!" gasped Gwendolen with whitened lips, falling back against the wall.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the servant garrulously, with that air of ghoulisn relish, with which servants always like to impart bad news—"he died this afternoon, about four o'clock, all of a sudden like. He had a telegram to say as 'ow he had lost all his money"—(The man had taken advantage of the general confusion to read it) "and it took his heart, which has been affected a long time, the doctor says. Mrs. Miles"—he forgot the de Courcy in his haste—"is mortal bad too,—high sterics,—something awful. She've bin going from one fit to another, it's as much as me and Jane could do to 'old her down. There now, ma'am, don't take on so," he added soothingly, moved to compassion by the sight of the anguish on that pale, drawn face.

"Where is he? Take me to him," gasped Gwendolen, rallying herself with an effort.

The servant led the way silently. There was something in the intensity of her sorrow, which checked even his garrulity. In the chamber Death's grim satellites had done their dread work; all was quiet and peaceful now.

With one glance at the sheeted outline, Gwendolen threw herself down upon the bed, with an exceeding bitter cry.

This was her welcome home.

* * * * *

"I never heard such nonsense—never!" cried Mrs. de Courcy Miles, regarding her niece with indignant eyes.

They were sitting in the study together about a week after the Professor's death. It was a cheerless February afternoon. Mrs. de Courcy Miles had ensconced herself in the Professorial chair—it was the most comfortable one in the room—and had drawn it up close to the blazing fire. So that in a sense she might be said to speak *ex cathedra*.

Gwendolen gave a little weary sigh as her aunt's

ejaculation fell upon her ears. She had heard it at least fifty times before in the course of the last few days. (Mrs. Miles was a past-mistress in the art of "nagging.") Then she went on with her task again. It was a sad task that she was engaged upon. She was looking through her dead father's private letters and papers—those sort of things which men are wont to hide away from every human eye, which they hardly ever look at themselves, but still keep by them—stray links in the chain of memory—sacred relics of the past. She came across many things—love-letters of her mother's, the ink dim and faded now, a lock of sunny brown hair, a faded photograph of a child—herself. This last proof of her dead father's love was too much for Gwendolen. She bowed her head, her eyes filled with tears.

Mrs. Miles watched her narrowly over the top of her *Court Journal*, which did duty as a fire-screen. Taking her niece's emotion to be a sign of weakness she renewed the attack.

"And people are beginning to talk already," she continued. "Only yesterday the Master of St. Bridget's asked me where your husband was and I had to trump up some excuse. I said that his lungs were too delicate for him to leave the Riviera—and Belinda and Araminta both suspect there's something wrong. I am sure they do by the way they asked me about you yesterday,—I know that twinkle in Belinda's eye; and once let them get hold of the story it will be all over the place. A pretty tale indeed for them to gossip about! A wife of a month—and separated from her husband! Not that I care what they say, for I shall soon be away from the whole lot—thank goodness!—but you, you ought to have proper respect for yourself, Gwendolen, and for your family. Think how angry Lord Baltinglass must be, and just now too when his help would be so valuable to us. Not one of the Baltinglass family at the funeral. No wonder people smell a rat. . . . Do you hear what I say, Gwendolen?" queried Mrs. Miles sharply with startling suddenness. "Why don't you answer me and not sit there like a wooden image?"

"I hear," replied Gwendolen in a low voice without raising her head. (It would have been strange if she didn't, for Mrs. Miles was apt to become *crescendo* when excited.) "I have nothing to add to what I have told you before. What you say about people talking makes no difference to me,—none."

"Then it ought to do so," retorted Mrs. Miles, incensed at this new proof of Gwendolen's obstinacy.

Suddenly she changed her manner; it might not be wise to press her niece too hard. So she adopted a high moral tone which sat upon her oddly, like a youthful make-up on a withered face.

"You are doing a very wrong and wicked thing, Gwendolen," she said. "A wife's first duty is to her husband. After all my careful training, you ought to remember that, I am sure."

"And has a husband no duty towards his wife?" asked Gwendolen with a faint ring of scorn in her voice.

"Certainly he has," rejoined Mrs. Miles briskly. "He should pay her bills and give her a liberal allowance, and he should—there are many things he should do. And I am sure your husband, if only managed properly, would be the most generous of men. I wish I had him for a week," said Mrs. Miles sagely.

"He has wronged an innocent girl and deceived me," said Gwendolen in a dull flat voice, as though repeating a formula learned by rote. She had indeed whispered it to her truant heart many times these last few days.

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Miles, "I haven't common patience to listen to you. Innocent girl, forsooth! Some designing cat or other, I have no doubt. I dare say the creature feathered her nest well. I know the bold-faced hussies; I have seen them skipping about with Paris-made gowns, and diamonds big enough to make an honest woman turn green with envy. Where do they get them from I should like to know, if it isn't from our husbands and our lovers? They never give *us* such diamonds. . . . As to his deceiving you, why, if women were to demand a certificate of strict morality from the men they marry, they would never get husbands at all."

"Men expect it from their wives, or from the women who are to be their wives," replied Gwendolen, harping on her old theme.

"It is not the same thing—quite different. I never heard such sentiments. They are absolutely indecent. Wherever you could have picked up such ideas from I don't know, not from *me*—that I am sure of. I always told poor dear James he ought to have kept a tighter hand over you,—allowing you to read whatever you liked and running to church all day and every day. This is what it has all come to," declared Mrs. Miles, fanning herself vigorously with the *Court Journal*.

"I need no Church to tell me what is right," said Gwendolen, looking at her aunt with a steady gaze. She looked very pale in her deep mourning dress. "I have followed the dictates of my own conscience and the sure guide of the Gospel."

"I do not wish to say anything against religion," Mrs. Miles rambled on, apparently addressing a distant chair. "I am a religious woman myself, I hope,—all respectable women are religious,—and as for the Gospel, I dare say it was quite suited to Jews and Gentiles and"—vaguely—"all those semi-barbarous heathen creatures, who lived such a long time ago. But it is hardly suitable for Society in the present day, in a literal sense, I mean."

"Evidently," said Gwendolen with a sigh.

Then she went on sorting her letters. There was a little pause, but it was only the lull before the storm.

"I can't think what your husband is about to let you go on like this," continued Mrs. Miles presently in an aggrieved tone. "Hasn't he written to you?"

"No," said Gwendolen, and she set her trembling lips. "I have heard nothing from him. I expect to hear nothing from him. Were he to write to me, I should return his letters unopened. I told him when we parted that everything must be over between us, and he has taken me at my word."

Brave words these; but no one knew save herself the awful desolation in her heart, the eager longing for news of him, which she strove in vain to quell.

Mrs. Miles gave a contemptuous sniff.

"What a poor weak-minded creature he must be," she exclaimed, "to take a woman at her word! And I thought he was so fond of you! If I were your husband, I'd make you come back sharp enough, I warrant you."

"Would you force me to live under the same roof with a man who has led an immoral life?"

"Was there ever such an argumentative, obstinate creature?" cried her aunt, apostrophizing the ceiling. "I can't think where you get your obstinacy from, I am sure. Not from *our* side of the family. Poor dear James was always amenable enough, I will say that of him. What you expect of a husband I don't know. You ought to go to India for a time, that would enlarge your ideas. Or you can look nearer home. Look at the Duchess of Puffeballe, for instance. How well she bears it, and every one knows that the Duke has a perfect harem stowed away somewhere. That dear Creeper-Crawley told me so. But the Duchess doesn't know, or rather she pretends she doesn't know. And quite right too—a woman ought to stick to her husband, even if he were a regular Henry the Eighth."

To this diatribe Gwendolen made no reply. She had said too much already. To answer was to add fuel to the flame.

Mrs. Miles regarded her with compressed lips. The situation was becoming alarming, the girl must be brought to reason somehow.

"Perhaps you would be good enough to inform me," she said with crushing civility, "in the event of this separate establishment, what allowance your husband proposes to give you to maintain it with? As he apparently consents to the ridiculous arrangement, I hope it is a good one. It was a great mistake that there were no settlements. I told poor dear James so at the time, but he was always so unbusiness-like—as events have proved—and Lord Baltinglass seemed disposed to be so generous that I didn't like to press it."

Gwendolen started as if stung, a deep flush overspread her face.

"He makes me no allowance," she cried. "I would not touch his money—not one penny—it would burn me. I would rather starve."

"And starve you will, and serve you right too," said Mrs. Miles brutally. Mrs. Wilfrid Tyrconnel *plus* a handsome allowance, even if separated from her husband, might have been worth conciliating; Mrs. Wilfrid Tyrconnel penniless and at hopeless issue with the Baltinglass family certainly was not. "How do you propose to live?" she went on shrilly. "You know your father has died without a sixpence—bankrupt almost—I shall be surprised if there is enough to pay the creditors. We are only in the house on sufferance; I wonder the bailiffs are not in it at the present moment. It was shameful of James, that it was, to go and speculate all his money away like this, and not leave anything for me, not even the plate—I who have kept his house all these years, and made such sacrifices for him too. And I pleaded with him—I did everything in my power to dissuade him from trusting that Coryton creature, who is now living on the fat of the land with our money. But he would not listen, the obstinate mule! And now I am left like this. Oh! it is shameful, *shameful!*"

Mrs. de Courcy Miles abandoned the *Court Journal* for her pocket-handkerchief and sought refuge in tears.

Gwendolen bent her head still lower. Alas! It was all true. Her poor father! He had been duped, deceived, ruined. She was penniless, and the man who had done all this was her husband's own familiar friend. Then a sense of the injustice done to the dead by her aunt's coarse words struck her.

"How can you speak so, Aunt?" she said indignantly. "You know that it was you who advised poor father to entrust his money to Mr. Coryton. I heard you urge him to do so myself."

"You heard nothing of the kind," cried Mrs. Miles, now thoroughly roused. "It is a monstrous fabrication. But there, it is only what I might expect. Like father, like daughter—nothing but ingratitude. How do you propose to live, I should like to know.

You are much mistaken if you think you are going to palm yourself off upon me. I have quite enough to do to keep myself—it's little enough I have, only the pension of a colonel's widow. What a mercy your father couldn't get hold of that, or he would have squandered my little all too. No—carry out your absurd ideas and I wash my hands of you once and for all. Not one sixpence will you get from me. Again I ask, how do you propose to live?"

"I shall work," said Gwendolen, apparently unmoved by her aunt's wrath, "as many others have done before me; my wants are few."

She spoke with the quiet confidence of one who has never known what it is to want—never known what it is to work for a living—to seek work and not to find it.

"Work!" echoed Mrs. Miles with a scoffing laugh, jumping up suddenly from her chair. "What will you work at, I should like to know? What are you fitted for? An underpaid governess, a lady-help, or perhaps you'll take in plain sewing—like enough you won't even get that. People are not so fond of employing women who are separated from their husbands, I can tell you. It doesn't matter who's in the wrong, it is always the woman who gets blamed, and so you'll soon find out. The future Lady Baltin-glass and plain sewing—it is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard of. If it gets into the Radical papers, it'll be enough to upset the House of Lords, that it will."

She paused a moment, breathless, glaring at her niece. Gwendolen again took refuge in silence.

"I wash my hands of you," cried Mrs. Miles, retreating towards the door. "I shall denounce you to Lord Baltinglass. I shall leave this horrid Cambridge to-morrow and go back to Kensington—dear Kensington, how I wish I had never left it!" Then, with startling inconsistency and a threatening of hysterics—"You ungrateful creature, if it hadn't been for you, instead of being hounded out of the house like this I might be living in luxury at Blarney.

Never shall I forgive you, never! I wish, oh! how I wish your husband may drag you back to him by the hair of your head!"

And with this Parthian dart Mrs. Miles whisked out of the room, and slammed the door after her.

A few days later Gwendolen left Cambridge.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SPROUTING OF THE BAY TREE.

Ce sont surtout les commencements qui sont charmants.—*LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.*

"You see we are so very poor," said Violet.

"You don't look it," rejoined Theodora bluntly, as she helped herself to another glass of claret.

They were sitting at lunch together in the well-appointed dining-room of the Coryton's nutshell establishment in Curzon Street. It was a pretty little room, pretty like everything else in this pretty little house. It had a dado of olive green running around the walls, a Smyrna carpet, tapestry curtains, handsomely carved furniture of unpolished oak, half a dozen good pictures on the walls, three or four vases of Oriental ware on the mantelshelf, and the table with its white damask, silver, and bright-hued flowers setting off an excellent lunch. Everything betokened comfort, refinement, even luxury. But poverty?—No. Theodora was right. If appearances were to be trusted, Mr. and Mrs. Coryton were flourishing like the Green Bay Tree.

Violet manufactured a little sigh. It was her policy just now to pose as poor with her rich friends. People expected so much less of one. Besides every one was "poor" now. It was much better form.

"Poverty is a relative thing," she answered sweetly. "Of course Poley and I have enough to rub along with

in a Darby and Joan sort of manner. But if Lord Southwark were not defraying Poley's election expenses, I really do not know how we should have managed them. Of course we would do anything for the Cause, make any sacrifice, but West-Southwark is such an expensive constituency to contest. We are so *very* grateful to Lord Southwark."

She said this with honeyed sweetness, hoping it would find its way round to the right quarter through the medium of Theodora.

"You needn't be then," said that young lady with characteristic frankness, "Lord Southwark's not the man to do anything without an object. He's only poppin' your husband in to keep the seat warm for Pimlico. He'll have to turn out when Pim's ready for it,—don't ch'er know?"

"Oh! of course," echoed Violet, with an inscrutable little smile. "We quite understand that. Still, I repeat, it is very, very good of Lord Southwark, to have put Poley forward."

"Well I s'pose he could have run some one else," said Theodora with engaging candor. "There's Creeper-Crawley for instance, he's a useful person, or that man we met at Blarney you remember, Wigglesworth, was his name, wasn't it, the man with a bald head and a mustache like a dilapidated tooth-brush. He's a protégé of Sir Alway and Lady Sumtyme Typsey, isn't he? You know whom I mean. By the way, talking about Blarney, do you ever hear anything of Wilfrid Tyrconnel or his wife by any chance?"

"Never," answered Violet with a little pout and a shrug of her shoulders.

"That's curious," said Theodora reflectively. "You used to be such pals, don't ch'er know. Poor Wilfrid! I'm sorry for him. Somebody told me,—Lauder Forbes I think,—that he was drivin' a hansom, or somethin'. If so, I'm sorry for his fares, for Pigeon was never much of a whip. I wonder what's become of his wife too. She's livin' apart from him, I'm told—governessin' or somethin'. I wonder how long they'll keep it up. It's a great mistake to go on quarrellin' with your bread and butter."

So saying, Theodora helped herself to a slice of reindeer tongue "just to top up with," as she phrased it. She had a good healthy appetite and was not ashamed of it; there was nothing of the Lydia Languish about Theodora.

"I wonder what the row was about between them," she went on presently, pushing her plate aside with an air of satisfaction.

"I really do not know," replied Violet wearily. "I only know that poor Lord Baltinglass has been very angry about it. He has been abroad ever since March. It was a most unsuitable marriage. Poley did everything he could to prevent it. She was an utterly impracticable person and Wilfrid Tyrconnel was always very wild. Now that Poley's restraining influence is gone, I am afraid he has gone from bad to worse. Why, if you believe me, he has even quarrelled with Poley, his best friend, who sacrificed so much for him. I don't wonder at Lord Baltinglass being angry——"

"Humph!" ejaculated Theodora.

"But do not let us talk about them," continued Violet, not quite understanding this oracular utterance, "let us talk of something else."

"With all my heart," said Theodora. (One cannot waste too much time over unfortunate friends in *Vanity Fair*). "You haven't got such a thing about you as a cigarette, have you. Thanks. Got a light. Thanks awfully. . . . Well, what shall we talk about, the West-Southwark Election? I s'pose that's what you wanted me to come to lunch for, wasn't it?"

"Well, of course I should like to know what you think my husband's chances are," said Violet, a little taken aback at this plainness of speech. "You see," she went on winningly, "you know so much about politics."

"I know a good deal about West-Southwark. I should be a fool if I didn't, considering I've been workin' up a Habitation of the Primrose League there, ever since that affair of Loose-Fyshe's first came out. Oh we shall run our man in, not a doubt of it. Fyshe refuses to retire for any other Liberal Candidate, and the Nonconformist 'conscience,' as they call it, is dead

against him. Your political Nonconformist can swallow a good deal, but this cream-tart business is a little *too* hot."

"Yes," said Violet drily, "Mr. Fyshe has committed the unpardonable sin, he has been found out."

"I don't agree with you at all," answered Theodora with uncompromising frankness. "At least, it don't strike me in that way," she went on flicking the ash from her cigarette, "I'm not over squeamish, I hope, and I don't see what a man's private life has to do with his public career though I wouldn't say so on a platform. Look at Napoleon and Nelson and all the rest of 'em. But there are some things which are not good form, and putting pepper into a cream-tart is one of 'em to my thinkin'." And she tossed off a glass of Allasch.

"Yes, yes," said Violet wincing. She hated long tirades and Theodora's in particular. "By all means: I quite agree with you. And you really think Poley's chances are good? If only you and your splendid Primrose League will work for him, I am sure he must win."

"We shall pull him through," said Theodora, who, like most young women of her kind was not prone to under-rate her own importance, "with the Primrose League and the Southwark influence, he's bound to head the poll. "We've got a meetin' of the Habitation to-morrow and I'm goin' to canvass from house to house every day next week. There's a great art in canvassin'. It's more important than speakin' if people would only realize it. You'd better come round with me. It'll do good if you show yourself and help the Cause, and then I can put you through your paces."

"That's awfully good of you," said Violet enthusiastically. "I'll do anything, *anything* of course."

"Well, I must be off," said Theodora, jumping up in her usual abrupt manner. "I've promised to meet Pim at Tattersall's a little after three and have a look at a Park hack he's got his eye on for me. Where's my dawg? Oh here he is," as a villainous-looking bull pup emerged from beneath the table, where he had

been sniffing round Violet's ankles much to her discomfort. But she had borne it like a Spartan. "He's a beauty, isn't he? A nose you could hang a bucket on. Come along, Bill." . . .

When Theodora had taken her leave, Violet went up to her room,—a cosy nest with white wood furniture and draperies the shade of a blush rose, to put on her things for a drive. She gave a little sigh of satisfaction as she looked around. Certainly the Professor's money had been laid out to a good advantage. Then she drew on her gloves,—Violet's male friends kept her well supplied in gloves,—and tripped downstairs to the neat well-appointed victoria, which was waiting for her.

She had a good many things to do that afternoon, a lot of cards to leave and one or two At-homes, for the season, precipitated by the coming General Election, was dying with a rush, and people were trying to cram everything into a week or two, that which should have been spread over a month. It was quite late before she got home, after a turn in the Park just to give her an appetite for dinner.

She found her husband busily writing upstairs in the little room, which he called his study.

He threw down his pen as she came in with a sigh of relief.

"That will do, I think," he said, gathering up the sheets of foolscap on which he had been writing his Election Address. "Read it over, Vixie, and tell me what you think of it. It's not more packed with platitudes than the ordinary run of such documents, I suppose. There is the usual reference to dynamite and American gold and the infamy of smashing our grand old Constitution. I think that touch about Free Food will catch the Labor Vote and that phrase about the sanctity of domestic life the Nonconformists. What do you think?"

Violet looked over the sheets with a critical air.

"You have forgotten the 'Maintenance of true Religion,' she said presently.

"Dear me, so I have. How stupid of me to forget it. Make a note of it, Vixie. Anything else?"

"There is no direct allusion to the Fyshe scandal," she said, tentatively. "Is the sentence about the sanctity of domestic life sufficient?"

"I think so. We will leave the women to do all the rest. . . Well then, I'll stick in that little omission about religion and send it off to the printer. Lord Southwark will want to see the proofs, of course. Tomorrow the campaign begins in earnest."

"And in three weeks' time," she exclaimed, throwing her arms around his neck, "I shall be the wife of a real live M. P. Oh! Poley. When it comes to be a question of reward for 'services to the party,' remember nothing less than a baronetcy will suffice. You must *not* take a knighthood like that wretched Cincinnatus Spreadeagle."

He returned her embrace in earnest, a smile lighting up the dark beauty of his face. They were really very fond of one another, these two.

"His was a prize for silence. I mean to make my voice heard I can tell you. Nothing less than an Under-Secretaryship will content me to begin with—I mean after my first Parliament."

"When Lord Southwark means you to make way for Pimlico," reminded Violet with a little pout.

"Lord Southwark has forgotten that possession is nine points of the law. Once in, I am not going out again unless I am bought out with a safe seat elsewhere and something down on the nail. We know all about that, don't we, little one? But tell me what have you been doing all day?"

"I had that odious Theodora and her horrid dog to lunch. She and her ridiculous Primrose League will make themselves useful canvassing of course. Then I made some calls, and went on to Lady Lily Splashe's. She edits a society paper, you know, and is going to put me in next week as one of the 'Beauties of To-day.' It all helps."

"I thought that was a question of buying five hundred copies at least," said Coryton, looking a little glum.

"Not to me, dear boy. I tell her all about the smart parties I go to,—from which she is tabooed now, poor

thing—and this and some puff-paragraphs are the return. ‘Cutlet for cutlet,’ you know.”

“You are a genius, Vixie,” said her husband admiringly. “What else?”

“I have written your biography for Creeper-Crawley’s paper. You are to be the next in the series of ‘People I have known.’ This is an age of advertisement, you know; there is nothing like log-rolling. Cultivate the press agencies and subscribe to Romeike, that’s my motto. By the way, he’s coming here to dinner to-night—Creeper-Crawley, I mean, not Romeike,—and so is Cincinnatus Spread-eagle. They are both to help you in the election in different ways. Dear me, it’s half-past seven already! I must be off to dress.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

WEST-SOUTHWARK.

The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists and calculators has succeeded.—BURKE.

THE fateful day of the West-Southwark Election opened bright and encouraging. There is nothing so encouraging as a bright day, most of all in politics, and Coryton, Violet and their chosen henchmen, as they drove down in two-horse victorias at cockerow, were all in the highest spirits. Partly because they felt they were going to win and partly because it was such a relief to have done with this tiresome electioneering at last.

The campaign had been wound up the night before with a crowded meeting, where Sir Cincinnatus Spread-eagle had discoursed, in his very best Yankee twang, on the irresistible vigor of British patriotism, and Mr. Toadey-Snaile, M. P., amid the respectful silence due to so solemn a subject, had dealt with the sanctity of the home.

It had all been unanimous, enthusiastic, righteously indignant. And Coryton knew enough of politics to be aware that, though unanimous and even enthusiastic meetings never mean anything, yet when the free and independent turn up the whites of their eyes, they always mean business. Moreover, since that meeting Coryton had obtained his trump-card and there seemed no doubt that he had only to play it in order to win the game.

For the last ten days his agent had been telling him that the issue depended entirely upon the votes of some two hundred members of an Independent Labor Club, who wanted the government to take up the question of Free Food in the Board Schools. This grimy little club had become the pivot of the election, and had acquired a totally disproportionate importance. The caucuses of both parties had tried to bully it, but it had snapped its fingers. The hack wire-pullers had been sent down to parley and had received only a snubbing for their pains. Mr. "Tutu" Falstaff had had the door slammed in his face and the Hon. Fitz Marmaduke Brabazon had had his hat bashed in. Then Mr. Toadey-Snaile, M. P., and Mr. Snorthorse, chief among wire-pullers, had said, "Surely they will reverence us;" but even the visits of those magnates to the little club in Petticoat Lane, West-Southwark, had been of no avail.

If the Government would pledge itself to bring in a "Beer and Buns" bill, as it was popularly called that Session, the Wat Tyler Club would vote solid for Mr. Coryton; if the Government refused and the Old Parliamentary Leg would give a pledge, unqualified by his usual sesquipedalian parentheses, the Wat Tyler Club would vote solid for Mr. Loose-Fyshe. A pledge from Snorthorse or Toadey-Snaile would not suffice. No excuses were held to be satisfactory. It was a case of no bill, no votes. What cared the Wat Tyler Club for the fact that the Conservative party was opposed to the bill on principle? What cared it for the fact that Mr. Loose-Fyshe was pledged up to the eyes against it? No bill, no votes!

Mr. Artful Cadger, President of the Wat Tyler

Club, was inexorable. It was in vain that Coryton assured him of sympathy and objected that the Conservatives of West-Southwark would not stand a pledge on the subject; in vain that he promised to support such a bill if some one else would introduce it. No bill, no votes!

So Coryton had an interview with the Prime Minister the day before, and now he had in his breast-pocket a letter in that statesman's precise hand, which could not fail to brush away Mr. Cadger's last remaining scruples.

"We will bring in a bill," the Prime Minister had said, with an oracular smile, after listening in an amused paternal sort of way to Coryton's pleading, "we will bring in a bill, by all means, if the Wat Tyler Club insists. Just now that body is master of the situation."

"It is the key to the election," said Coryton, with a passable affectation of earnestness.

"And the election is the pivot of the Empire," returned the Prime Minister sarcastically. "So, of course, we will bring in a bill. But whether we shall pass it," and he looked longingly towards his chemical laboratory, impatient to end the interview, "God bless my soul, that's quite another thing!"

Coryton laughed. "They'll expect you to resign if you don't pass it."

"They will, will they?" he returned gruffly, as he sat down to write the required letter.

The agent had wished Coryton to read the letter at last night's meeting, but Coryton had prudently preferred not to risk Conservative abstentions by such a course and had determined to communicate with the Wat Tyler Club only at the last moment. Every effort would be made to poll his own party early and, when there were as few as possible of them to risk alienating, he would go and make his terms with the mammon of the Wat Tyler Club.

He knew, since their last deputation to Mr. Fyshe, that they would certainly not vote for that statesman, and that it was merely a question of producing the Prime Minister's letter and securing their votes at any

time. With their votes the victory was assured and Coryton, as he drove down to Southwark, in the early morning, felt that his first great ambition was virtually attained and that he was on the threshold of a great career.

Never had Violet been in such spirits,—certainly never at that time in the morning.

“Do you know,” she said to Mr. Toadey-Snaile, “I had been *dreading* this business of getting up in the middle of the night. I always agreed with Admiral Mauresk, who tells you, ‘One always feels *frightfully ill* in the morning and then one gets gradually better and better all day, until by dinner time one is charming.’ I used to think it was simply tempting Providence even to show oneself before luncheon. But somehow to-day, at 6.30 A.M., I feel as sprightly and active, and keen about things as a cheap tripper on a Bank Holiday.”

“She’s as beautiful as a butterfly,
And as proud as a Queen,”

trolled forth Mr. Toadey-Snaile with a slobbery leer.

“Is pretty little Sally Popkins
Of Clerkenwell Green,”

Coryton hummed, completing the couplet.

Violet frowned slightly and changed the conversation.

“I wonder how early Theodora Gargoyle will turn up. She is going to drive a dog-cart ablaze with Poley’s posters all day to bring up voters. She wanted it to be a tandem, but Pim persuaded her that rotten eggs would fidget the horses and, though she would not mind such things for herself, she was not going to risk them for her precious ‘gees.’”

The election passed off as most elections do. There was the usual display of activity at the various committee rooms, the usual demonstrations of party-spirit on the part of all the small boys in the constitu-

ency, and the usual amount of bribery, treating and intimidation under the rose. There was more than the usual amount of social splash, which is always imported into metropolitan elections beyond Jordan. With the Radical candidate it was a life or death struggle and no effort had been spared to make an imposing show of every single one of his friends who still stuck to him. Admiral Mauresk had sent his carriage all the way from Dorking and his son "Tiger," was driving a van round all day bringing up voters. A number of French statesmen, as yet untainted by the breath of Panama, went the round of the committee rooms to impress the electorate. And late in the afternoon, when things were beginning to look black, the wife of the ex-Premier came down and drove rapidly three times round the constituency in a poke bonnet:—"as if the seat was to be captured like Jericho," said Sir Cincinnatus in comment, as he gulped down another brandy and soda.

On the other side the struggle was no less keen. The party felt that a victory in West-Southwark meant a new lease of life and it took care to send all its soldiery into the field, from the light skirmishers of the Primrose League in their smartest spring dresses to the heavy ordnance of the Beerage and the kept regulars of the Working Men's Clubs. Never had such a display of posters and election literature been known, never had so much ingenuity been expended in devising telling cries. Before the early milkman had started on his rounds, the whole pavement of the constituency had been stencilled in large black letters with a command to "VOTE FOR CORYTON AND THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT." Before the postman had concluded the first delivery of letters, every street had an arrangement of banners, hung from one Radical window to another, proclaiming to the world that "SOUTHWARK TRUSTS AND HONORS FYSHE." Before the workers had gone out for their dinner-hour, every wall and hoarding had the pictorial representation of a gigantic loaf with the legend "VOTE FOR FYSHE AND CHEAP BREAD," in subtle allusion to Coryton's supposed leanings towards Fair Trade. Before the workers had returned to their work, Coryton's printers, at the suggestion of

the astute Creeper-Crawley, had pasted the additional words "AND CHEAP WAGES" at the foot of the placards.

Towards tea-time the agents on both sides were cocksure of success, but Mr. Creeper-Crawley, who knew more about elections than everybody else, shook his head gravely and said oracularly that he thought they now had a slight majority, but that he fervently wished that "night or Blucher" would arrive. Blucher in this case was Mr. Artful Cadger, President of the Wat Tyler Club, whom Coryton had been vainly searching for during more than an hour.

The two hundred of Mr. Cadger's brigade had been spending the day at the Blue Badger Tavern, watching each other like lynxes, determined that they would be bought or sold as one man. But Mr. Cadger was off on a secret mission to the Goat and Compasses and, in his absence, nothing that Coryton could say or show had the faintest effect upon his followers. So Lord Pimlico and his van, Theodora Gargoyle and her gaudy dog-cart, Lady Elizabeth in a brougham, Mr. Blunder Cable with his drag and Violet on the box-seat beside him, waited outside to take them up to the poll as soon as they would come.

Meanwhile, Coryton dashed along in Lord Rupert Cameron's private hansom from one low public house to another, in search of the key to the situation, the "pivot of the Empire," as he told Mr. Cadger the Prime Minister had called him, when at last he found him in a half-drunken condition in the bar parlor of the Marquis of Granby. However, everything was accomplished all right; the Prime Minister's letter more than sufficed to turn the "Pivot of the Empire;" and Coryton brought him back in triumph to the Blue Badger as fast as his hansom could scamper. Theodora gave a joyous view-halloo as they came in sight and the other impatient amateur Jarveys joined in giving them a tumultuous ovation. The faithful two hundred needed but few words of persuasion from their chief and soon they were driving down to perform their duties as citizens as fast as their aristocratic conveyances could carry them.

As soon as the poll was closed, everybody drove

back to dinner at Lord Southwark's. Some were for going down to hear the poll declared at midnight from Southwark town-hall, but the majority preferred to await the pleasure of the telegraph wires. Everybody was unanimous in congratulating Coryton upon the splendid manner in which he had fought the election, and especially upon the diplomatic talent he had shown in the suing and winning of Mr. Artful Cadger. Violet also came in for many pretty speeches, especially from the men, upon her cunning as a canvasser. Nor were compliments wanting to Theodora Merivale for her tireless efforts and success with her horses in a crowd.

When much-needed refreshment had put everybody in a more hopeful frame of mind, Lord Southwark asked Mr. Creeper-Crawley across the table what he thought the majority would be.

"A close thing, my Lord, a very close thing," returned that oracle. "Thanks to the Blue Badger contingent, we have certainly won, but I shall be surprised if Mr. Coryton's majority exceeds 150."

Theodora whistled and offered to bet him six ponies to four that it would exceed 500, but Creeper-Crawley only blinked benevolently and said he did not wish to take advantage of a lady's ignorance of electioneering matters.

"If Crawley is right," said Mr. Toadey-Snaile in his unctuous way, "our good friend Cadger will really have justified his claim to the title of 'Pivot of the Empire.' Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Creeper-Crawley had not to wait long for the accuracy of his prediction to be justified, for within a couple of hours the electric wires were throbbing through the country and beneath the seas with the news that a young and unknown man had defeated by the narrow majority of 179 votes a statesman, whom Europe had long been watching with anxiety.

When at last Coryton and his wife were alone, in the small hours of the next morning, their hearts were too full for many words. But as Violet turned up the lamp in their little sitting-room in Curzon Street and looked at her husband, she thought she had never

beheld so victorious a visage. He seemed to hold himself more erect than was his wont, his eyes had a sparkle more brilliant than kohl, and his nostrils were dilated like those of a racehorse, which has just carried off the prize. She stood gazing at him fondly as he stood by the chimney, lost in thought. Then suddenly an irresistible impulse came over her. She placed her hands upon his shoulders and looked up enthusiastically into his eyes exclaiming, "Poley! Poley! This is too good to be true. I am sure it must be some heavenly dream and presently there will be a knock at the door and I shall wake up to find that you are not an M.P. after all."

Coryton looked back tenderly into her eyes and said, "Vixie, darling, this is the beginning of a great career. You and I together, my clever little girl, we are irresistible. There is nothing so high that it is out of our reach."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GRUB STREET, W. C.

"My life is one demd horrid grind."—C. DICKENS : *Nicholas Nickleby*.

"WOT'LL you 'ave for dinner to-day, sir?"

"I don't know. Anything. Whatever's least nasty."

"Let's see. Yer 'ad steak last night. Would yer fancy chawps to-day? Or p'r'aps" (this as an inspiration) "p'r'aps I might do yer some tasty little weal cutlets. Only weal comes expensive just now."

"Pray don't trouble to put such a tax on your imagination. I shall dine out to-day."

There was a discontented silence for nearly a minute.

"Then there's lunch and dinner to-morrer, which, bein' Sunday, 'as got to be thought on. I suppose

yer'll be in to-morrer, won't yer, sir? for lunch and dinner."

"No. I won't be in to-morrow, for either lunch or dinner. I am sick of having nothing fit to eat. I can't stand it any longer. Leave me now. I am busy. I have a great deal of work to do and you keep on interrupting me. Leave the room, I say."

Tyrconnel's eyes filled with tears as his landlady bounced out of the room in a dudgeon, slamming the door after her. The room, as he looked round it wearily, was indeed enough to give any one the blues and he felt broken in health as well as sick at heart. The carpet was of the cheap "Kidderminster" kind, which by the way is no longer made at all in the town of that ilk. It had a great vulgar pattern of impossible flowers, such as nature, in her vulgarest moments, never dreamed of perpetrating, and it seemed to have been chosen with a view of presenting the utmost possible discord with the bird of paradise wall-paper, which once had been of the brightest aniline dyes, but now looked a strange medley of griminess, and flaring bad taste, like an exhibit at the New English Art Club.

Some two feet above the level of the eye were a series of loyal and patriotic oleographs,—The death of Nelson, The wedding of Queen Victoria, and a portrait of a German princelet wearing the ribbon of the garter. Among them were three ordinary—very ordinary—dinner plates affixed to the wall by an arrangement of wire. On a side table was a ghastly erection of shells and mouldy birds and artificial grasses, protected from contamination by a bell-glass.

At a table in the centre of the room sat Tyrconnel, with a blank sheet of paper and a new stock of pens and blotting paper beside him. For a long time he sat with his elbows on the table and his hand pressed against his temples, vainly trying to think and only succeeding in starting fresh speculations about the infinite variety of stains and marks upon the scarlet cloth with the ornithological pattern.

He had suffered a great change since Monte Carlo. His face, which used to be rather cherubic in the old

days, had acquired a pinched, angular look ; his cheek-bones stood out prominently and there was a hectic flush upon them that boded no good. When he walked abroad, which he now only did for a specific object, men would often turn round in the street and whisper to each other. He now sat upon a hard, straight-backed chair, but his shoulders were rounded and he crouched over the table helplessly, and his mind kept wandering away to all sorts of sad, heartbreaking subjects. From time to time he would make a stern effort to collect his thoughts. He would sit bolt upright, gasp for breath and make a feeble motion to move his shoulders back. He would take up a pen, dip it in the ink and poise it in the air just above his blank sheet of paper. But it was no use. The words obstinately would *not* flow and he had not the physical strength to remain sitting to attention.

As he sat there in the gray November gloom, he went over, in a sad retrospect, all that had happened to him since his wife's flight from Cannes six months ago.

The recollection of his last scene with her and of the staggering shock caused him by her abrupt departure from Cannes, without so much as a line or a message, was burnt into his soul. Every train of thought seemed to lead back to that catastrophe, and all the events that followed it had no more reality to him than a bad dream.

Most of that never-to-be-forgotten night had been spent pacing up and down the sitting-room, in an agony of self-reproach and despair too piteous for words. He had tried to reason with himself, to find, if possible, some ray of hope for a happy future, but when the cold gray dawn came through the Venetian blinds and woke him from a restless stupor that had overtaken him on the sofa, it brought no relief to his perplexities. He knew Gwendolen's unbending obstinacy too well to believe that anything short of a miracle could alter it. And without Gwendolen life must be a blank to him. He had felt the restraints imposed by her stern code irksome at times, but now that she was absent, every trifle reminded him of her and added fresh torture to the wound.

What would become of him? To whom should he turn? God help him, he did not know. The day wore on until the short Cannes twilight was upon him, and he scarcely stirred. He sank into a sort of lethargy and remained in one position hour after hour, staring blankly into space.

All of a sudden the mood changed and a great craving for action came over him. He paced the sitting-room and poured himself out a stiff tumbler of brandy and soda. A telegram from Coryton was on the table, saying he and his wife would come over to lunch on the morrow, but he turned from it in disgust. How could any such mere mundane detail interest him now? How could he endure the superficial condolences, the veiled sneers, the idle gossip of those butterfly friends? To-morrow! He would be hundreds of miles away by then. Cannes was alive with memories. He would hasten away—anywhere. If he could not hope to rejoin his wife, he could at least escape from this torture.

No sooner said than done. When he was in this mood, he always acted on impulses. Bradshaw was hastily dragged out. Just time, by Jove! A bag and a portmanteau were packed. The landlord was paid his bill and told to have the rest of the luggage done up and sent home by *petite vitesse*.

Within an hour Tyrconnel was installed in a little salon, with his nose towards the North. He felt feverish, his head ached with great throbs and there was a numb pain in his chest which he had never known before. But he felt also a keen sense of relief, as if he had just passed through an agony and was weak and prostrate after it.

At last he was off. The familiar stations flashed past, the familiar names were bawled out sonorously, but it was all one to him. He did not get out once, he refused all proffers of food, all the way to Calais. The conductor was sent again and again for brandy, but it had no more effect on him than upon a man in whom poison has begun to work.

After Lyons there was snow everywhere, a soulless waste of white as far as the eye could reach in all

directions, and a great chill came over him, extending from the heart to the frail, shivering body. He wrapped himself more closely in his furs, he drew forth fresh rugs from the straps, but nothing could drive away the chill from his broken heart.

Something brought Coryton into his thoughts and he half regretted that he had not waited to see him. Coryton was a good fellow and had seen him round many a difficult corner before now. But no! That sleek, smiling face would have been maddening in the midst of a great grief. Violet Coryton? She was a sympathetic little thing and her presence could not have failed to be soothing. But how could she understand? Strong feelings, the sorrow of a lifetime would be about as intelligible to her as Coptic. He was best alone. Alone! Yes, indeed. He had not a single real friend,—no one to whom he could open his stricken heart now.

The train rattled on through the snow and darkness and seemed to snort mockingly as it forged ahead towards the unknown. The channel crossing was a fearful one, all the more fearful in the miserable cockle-shell of a boat, which the company seems always to select in connection with the more expensive services of trains. Tyrconnel, who at the best of times was a bad sailor, learned all the bitterness of the valley of the shadow of death. As Miss Connecticut once expressed it, "to begin with he was afraid he was going to die, and then he became much more afraid that he was not going to die after all."

At the end of the journey he just had energy enough to tell his cabman to drive to some lodgings in Curzon Street, kept by old servants, where he had often spent an odd week in the old days, when his father's house was shut up or it was convenient for some other reason. They welcomed him effusively but regretted more than they could say that they had not a crevice in the whole house to spare, and the best they could suggest was a house they knew of in Half-Moon Street hard by.

There he obtained two dreary little rooms on the second floor at the exorbitant rent of four guineas a

week and took to his bed at once. During three days he was delirious and the doctor for a time feared for his reason. It never occurred to any one to send for his relations and he remained there, at death's door, badly nursed, without a friendly face beside him, left to die like a dog in a ditch.

Thinking it over now in his Bloomsbury lodgings, he wondered how he had managed to survive that period of physical and mental torture. He clenched his fist and rapped the greasy table with it, cursing a malevolent Providence that had brought him through. And yet he was glad that he had not died then, for, while there was life, there was ever a lurking hope that he might see Gwendolen once more.

It was that hope, amounting almost to a fixed idea, which had buoyed him up through it all, and a deep intense longing came over him and shook his slender frame. He would see her! He must see her! But how? But when? He buried his face in his hands and swayed to and fro with impotent desire.

It was some months now since his delirious fever, but the delirious yearning was no whit less strong upon him. And yet he had had plenty of worries to distract his thoughts. As soon as he was well enough, he had written to his father and his aunt, telling them the whole story and more than the whole sad story in a torrent of self-reproach.

Never very good at lucid expression, he could now, in his weak half-hysterical condition, only put together a rambling inconsequential narrative, which exaggerated every wrong on his part and left out every extenuating circumstance. The natural inference, as far as any inference was possible from his ravings was that, before his honeymoon was a month old, he had left his wife at Cannes and gone off to Monte Carlo with some syren, whom he now denounced with ridiculous violence; that, when Gwendolen complained, he had told her brutally that the same code of morals was not to be expected from a man as from a woman; that he had abused her, ill-treated her, made her life a burden to her, and that she was obliged to leave him; that she had gone out into the

snow; that he did not know where she was and that it was useless to inquire; that he was very, very unhappy and needed sympathy; that he had no friend left in the world save his father and his aunt and that he implored them, in God's name, not to forsake him in his distress.

Lord Baltinglass, who had not a particle of sentiment in his composition, made short work of this tirade.

"By your own showing," he wrote, "you are a fool as well as a scoundrel. Your wife was not the one that I should have chosen for you, as I naturally thought that the future Lord Baltinglass of Blarney might have looked somewhat higher, but as you said your happiness was at stake, I gave way and you married a girl, who, if not rich or nobly born, was at any rate sweet and good and beautiful and, what is more, entirely devoted to your weak and wicked self. Now, as far as I can gather from your badly expressed letter—which is more worthy of a hysterical schoolgirl than of a Harrow and Cambridge education,—you have already insulted her virtue and innocence, with a vulgar intrigue. You have treated her so badly that she has been forced to run away and claim the protection of her relatives almost before your honeymoon was over. And now you don't seem to care a snap what may have happened to her, or show any desire to make amends. You simply come whining to us for sympathy with your weakness and wickedness. I blush to think that a son of mine should have acted in such a dishonorable and unmanly way. You will get no sympathy from me until you come to a right sense of your position and are reconciled to the wife you have injured. You seem to think of nobody at all but your contemptible self, neither of me nor of her. Have you so little to thank me for that you do not consider the injury to me such a scandal must cause if it got into the papers? My sympathy? No, nor my money shall you have until you make full amends for your wrong-doing. From this day forth your allowance ceases. Not a sixpence of mine shall go towards your shameless career of profligacy. Perhaps that will help to bring you to your senses, as

neither warnings nor stern experience seem to have any effect upon you. We shall see. Meanwhile I decline to see you or have any communication whatever with you, until I am assured that you have turned over a new leaf. Your sorrowful Father, BALTINGLASS."

Miss Tyrconnel wrote in quite as uncompromising a tone, though with less lucidity. After the shock given him by his father's letter, Wilfrid's heart sank within him at the prospect of wading through the twelve blurred pages, crossed and recrossed, in which his aunt delivered herself of her reproaches. She began with a biographical sketch of her nephew, dwelt upon the many merits of her system of juvenile education and his ingratitude in belying them, and launched off into more or less inappropriate quotations from the Bible about undutiful children and the way of transgressors. Then, like an old seven-volume novelist, she took Gwendolen in the same way; traced her parentage and education, pointing out the connection between her amenability as a child and her present state of grace; held forth upon the soundness of her doctrines and their usefulness as consolation in time of calamity. From this she drifted into a tirade against the wickedness of unbelief, and the yet greater enormity of misbelief, until Tyrconnel really began to think he must be a heathen and a savage as well as a criminal and a hysterical girl.

"You are treading the broad way," she said in conclusion, "that leadeth unto destruction. There can be no hope for you, either in this world or that which is to come, until you recognize your sin and turn unto the Lord. You have recognized your sin I hope and think, but have you turned unto the Lord? Have you laid your burden upon Him? It has been my prayer night and morning that you might see the error of your ways and turn your heart unto the wisdom of the just. Until you do this, until I have full proof of your conversion, I cannot intercede for you with your father, now justly incensed at your conduct; for until you are converted I can have no assurance that you will not be a backslider at the first onset of Satan."

These letters had precisely the contrary effect upon Wilfrid Tyrconnel to that, which his well-intentioned relatives had designed. Instead of bringing him to his knees by their severity, they stung him by their injustice and awoke the obstinacy, which was so deeply ingrained in his character. They acted as a fillip to his self-confidence, which had lately been almost crushed out of him by adversity. He had no friend in the world! His own father turned against him! His allowance was withdrawn.

Very well. He would show them all that he could get on admirably without friends. He would make his cantankerous father understand once for all, that he was not dependent upon the charity that he chose to dole out. He was not a fool, nor a cripple; he had a good headpiece and a sturdy pair of hands. Why should he not earn his own living and snap his fingers at them all? People are always more inclined to do you a service if they know that you have no vital need of it. When he had achieved prosperity on his own account, they would all be on their knees to him and it would be for him to dictate his own terms. His father would come to him and "humbly bring pieces of silver" and Gwendolen too, like the rest of them, would bow her head to the risen sun.

She took too much upon her, silly girl, but when he had trampled upon his enemies and his false friends and was in the flowing tide of prosperity again, she would recognize that he had been right after all. Would she?—He stopped himself in the torrent of indignation and wounded vanity. No, no. Gwendolen was not like that. His fair-weather friends would no doubt be veered round to him again by a triumph of this sort, by the proof that he was self-sufficing. Coryton, with whom he was now *en délicatesse*, would fawn upon him all the more and make fresh proffers of doing dirty work; Williams and Wilmot and the rest of them would trust him with a respect, which they had never feigned; and his father's commercial instincts would be flattered by a proof of worldly wisdom after his own heart.

But Gwendolen was not like that. It would be as

ridiculous as it was unjust to speak of her in the same breath with worldliness or material considerations. She was one of those rare few, of whom it could really be said otherwise than as a figure of speech, that she would rather starve than swerve one hair's breadth from what she thought to be her duty. If he made a million in a week, saved the country from invasion, or were appointed Prime Minister to-morrow, he knew full well that it would not prepossess her one iota in his favor. Alas! he feared that she was indeed lost to him, if not even success could pave his way back to her heart. Still, he contended, eager to see wisdom in the course of action he had decided to pursue, success would give him a foothold from which to approach Gwendolen. That canting old aunt, for instance, would be among the first to make her peace with him and she would be an invaluable ally for arguing with Gwendolen in her own line of country. And Mrs. de Courcy Miles would nag for him till she was blue in the face, if he could make any show of worldly prosperity. So true is it that "to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath."

Having made up his mind, the difficulty was how to put the resolve into execution. He had always had the profoundest contempt for poor devils, who profess themselves anxious for honest work but declare they can't find any, who are forever proclaiming their readiness to do "anything," but who all the while mean by the phrase that they are capable of doing nothing. But when he came to consider the matter from a personal point of view, it was not so easy to see where the bread and butter was to come from, to say nothing of short cuts to wealth. He could not dig. He knew nothing of business,—nor even of finance. His pride debarred him from dependent or semi-menial employment, such as a secretaryship or tutorship. The unexpectedness and urgency of the situation made any of the so-called learned professions out of the question. So, like most persons in a similar plight, he drifted into journalism, with the mistaken idea that it was the

high road to affluence and influence, and that it was compatible with independence, self-respect and even common honesty.

He had abilities above the average and had acquired a varied, if desultory education. He might be said to know a little about everything, though not everything about one thing, as somebody or other advised young men to do. But he had never read books from the point of view of one who may have to write them and, though he could criticise, he could not create. Still less had he acquired the technique of writing articles, the art of dressing up commonplaces to fill the rôle of oracular verities, the word juggling that passes current for epigram, nor the affectations that stand sponsors for originality of style. Moreover, he was handicapped with principles and a soul of his own and felt a great repugnance towards hiring out his pen as an advocate hires out his tongue.

He had begun by writing solemn, heavy articles on solemn, heavy subjects, fortified by research in the British Museum and an array of classical quotation. The style was as pedantic as Dr. Johnson, as unintelligible as Carlyle and as inconsequential as Ruskin. Conceive a thousand volumes of the *Quarterly Review* rolled into one and you have a faint idea of the heaviness of the treatise he began by sending off to a weekly journal, which prided itself upon its sparkling modernity.

It was a very laborious business grinding out his articles, and he scarcely accomplished more than one, some three thousand words in length, each week. They were not without cleverness; they were infinitely polished; they had certain touches of character, which, properly dished up, would have been applauded as original. But he did not know the grooves to which editors are accustomed; he had no discrimination about the style and subjects suitable to each paper; and he would never stoop to adapt his writing to the audience he had in view. Here it was, the best he could do. If they didn't like it, let them do without it and he would offer it elsewhere. They must take it or leave it, hoity-toity, confound it all!

The result was, that they did leave it. He plodded on and sent off neat bundles of manuscript by registered post to various editors with polite notes and stamps "for return if unsuitable." Sometimes the editor kept the stamps and destroyed the manuscript; at other times, strangely conscientious, he returned it with a printed formula, expressive of compliments and thanks. Then Tyrconnel would write another polite little note, enclose more stamps and post his parcel off by registered post to some other editor. No article was ever accepted, but each eventually found its way to some editorial waste-paper basket and was lost, for he never kept a copy of his work.

After his father had stopped his allowance, Tyrconnel had realized the necessity of minute economy and, though of all things the idea was most distasteful to him, he determined to grapple with it. At his marriage his father had made no settlement upon him but, while fixing a very liberal allowance, had given him to understand that he might draw upon him to any extent within reason.

The result had been that Tyrconnel never kept any accounts nor troubled about keeping any particular balance at his banker's. When Gwendolen had interfered with his enjoyment of Paris during the honeymoon, it was not from any need of economy, but because she considered it sinful to waste money on mere physical pleasures. His losses at Monte Carlo and Sally's requirements had, however, made a large hole in what remained of his last quarter's allowance and, after paying his bill in Half-Moon Street he found he was only worth some fifty pounds in the world.

This did not, however, greatly take him aback. He had a notion, like most people who have never tried it, that economy is perfectly easy if you only make up your mind to cut your garment according to your cloth. Fifty pounds he was sure would last a long time with proper precautions, certainly much longer than it would be necessary to wait until he could be earning his living. His first idea of proper precautions was to remove to what is known as "a

cheaper neighborhood." On the theory that what ought to be, is, most people are firmly convinced that dirty, badly-furnished accommodation in a squalid, remote or unfashionable part of London is necessarily very much cheaper than to live in cleanliness and comfort in Saint James's or Mayfair.

There can be no greater delusion. Each neighborhood has its cheap and its extortionate, its miserable and its comfortable, its pretentious and its commonplace accommodation, whether it be houses, flats or apartments.

The lodging-house fiend is the same everywhere: *coelum non animum mutat*, when he changes from Park Street, Grosvenor Square, to Park Road, Regent's Park, from Bayswater to Belgravia. The only difference is that you are very much more uncomfortable in the more barbarous parts and that anything you may save in the way of rent is more than counter-balanced by the addition to your cab-fares.

This Tyrconnel soon found out and he saw his fifty pounds melting away much faster than he liked. As we have seen, with the best will in the world, he often broke down under the sordid discomfort of bad food and filthy surroundings. That meant going out to a restaurant—first his old haunts in Regent Street and Piccadilly, then nasty Italian eating-houses in Oxford Street and the Strand, where he scarcely fared better than at home. And that meant spending more money.

Still he did not lose heart but persevered with his writing, flattering himself that, as soon as one article was accepted, he would catch the knack of the business and get into the swim straight away.

One afternoon he met Creeper-Crawley in the Strand, who being ignorant of his quarrel with his father, greeted him with great effusion.

Inspired by this cordiality, Tyrconnel began to discuss journalism with him volubly.

"My dear Tyrconnel," said Creeper-Crawley with some surprise and a trifle less enthusiasm, "you're on the wrong tack altogether. It's not a question of doing good work; it's a question of nobbling editors.

You should never, *never*—do you hear, *never*—write an article unless it is accepted in advance and even then only if you know for certain that the editor isn't a bigger liar than most of them. I am sorry I can be of no use to you. You should go and call on the Editor of *The Morning Pump*. Tell him you're the son of Lord Baltinglass and are going to stand for Parliament, and that you will be glad to do him a series of leading articles on the financial stability of the agricultural laborer."

"But I don't know anything about the agricultural laborer."

"All the better. You'll be able to approach the subject impartially. Failing him, I should go and see Cincinnatus Spreadeagle. He runs a rag subsidized by the party and would no doubt be delighted to share the pickings with you."

Next day Tyrconnel walked wearily down to the Strand and, after much inquiry from its discourteous frequenters, found his way at last to the offices of *Britain*, where Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle presently received him in a small and grimy editorial room. He looked curiously at his visitor and mentally noted the falling off in smartness and assurance, now only too evident in Wilfrid Tyrconnel. With the instinct of his kind, the editor altered his tone correspondingly. The unctuous welcome, which he had prepared when he received Tyrconnel's card, died away unuttered on his lips. He did not rise from his seat, but airily motioned the young man to a hard chair by the wall, saying unsympathetically,

"Well, Tyrconnel, what can I do for you? I'm a busy man, as you see."

Tyrconnel had no fight left in him to resent this insolence, but asked meekly,

"I—I wanted to know whether you'd take a few articles from me."

"Sorry I haven't much space to offer you. Most of our articles are done in the office. But if you care to send in anything, I'll give it my best consideration."

This was not very encouraging, but Tyrconnel was

sufficiently desperate to persevere, and he went on to suggest various subjects for articles. Sir Cincinnatus pool-pooled most of them, saying laconically that they had been done before. Then he rose and terminated the interview unceremoniously, saying,

"You must excuse me now. Send anything you like."

"What do you pay for articles?" stammered Tyrconnel uncomfortably as he fumbled for his hat.

Sir Cincinnatus's face grew even more unsympathetic than usual.

"I'm afraid we subsist mostly on voluntary contributions," he said with a brutal laugh; "but surely you haven't come down to penny-a-lining. I'll tell you what, though," he added after a pause. "If you want to make a few half-crowns, you can do me some bright pars on topical subjects. There's that fellow Coryton, for instance,—rising man, I'm told. You used to know him, didn't you? Knock me up a few spicy pars about him. . . . What, won't you?" he exclaimed in surprise, seeing that Tyrconnel had taken his hat and was making his way down the perpendicular staircase without a word. "Well, well, penny-a-liners mustn't be choosers. That'll teach me not to try philanthropy again in a hurry, if that's all the thanks I get for trying to do a poor beggar a good turn."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CROWN OF BAY LEAVES.

To be famous when you are young is the gift of the gods.—
B. DISRAELI : *Tancred*.

Behold, my son, with how little wisdom the world is governed.
—OXENSTIERN.

"'Tis the critical debate of the session," said the Prime Minister musingly.

He was sitting astride a hard cane-bottomed chair in the whip's room ; Lord Southwark sat on the table and dangled his legs uncomfortably ; Creeper Crawley and the whips were ranged uneasily against the wall. Meanwhile Lord Rupert Cameron lay stretched at full length on the one sofa, which the room contained, lazily puffing the blue smoke of his cigarette towards the ceiling.

"The only critical part about it," said Lord Rupert grumpily, "is how those ten labor beggars are going to vote. If they support the bill, we are in a majority ; if they vote against it, we are spoofed."

"What do they want?" asked Lord Southwark, with an affectation of ignorance.

"Payment of members out of the secret service fund," came a gruff voice from the sofa.

"Have you made out what they want, Crawley?" the Prime Minister asked, ignoring the voice from the sofa.

"It's the 'Beer and Buns' clause, my Lord. They supported us on the second reading of the bill, because we went in for free breakfasts in board schools as well as the free education which was all the old man would promise them. Now Snorthorse is going to give them the support of the opposition for a clause to provide

free Beer and Buns for Board School children at eleven o'clock every morning."

"Oh! for an hour in the House of Commons!" sighed the Prime Minister to himself.

At this moment the penetrating ping of the electric bell sounded through the lobbies, into the library and the smoking-room and on into the room of the Conservative Whips, where it roused Lord Rupert Cameron with a start from the snooze he had been feigning during Creeper-Crawley's explanation.

"Speaker's in the chair," he growled as the Whips trooped off to attend to their quarries; "now the job'll be to get him out again."

It was not to be one of those show debates, when country cousins come up "to hear the old man speak" and members with slender majorities devote long profitless hours to balloting for seats in the strangers' gallery for their constituents. Yet there was something of that electric feeling in the air, which betokens a government crisis, and opinions were pretty evenly divided in the lobby as to whether the government would survive the motion to go into committee on the Free Food and Education Bill. The subject had aroused a certain amount of interest in the country, rather because it concerned the life of the government and the prospects of a dissolution than for any concern about the provisions of the bill: Mr. Beer Hardup had given notice of an instruction to the Committee on the subject of free beer and buns; Mr. Grit, the one respectable labor member, had undertaken to second him, and it was rumored that he would receive the support of the whole official opposition, excepting the late Prime Minister and a few of his colleagues of cabinet rank, who would shirk responsibility by leaving the House without voting.

At the period I speak of the country was governed by an Opportunist party, which had usurped the name without acquiring the reputation of the ancient Tory party. With that Government the gilded goal was permanency in office; the only notion of statecraft to purloin and exaggerate the measures of the Opposition; and the only passport to their good

graces was a nodding acquaintance with the Spirit of the Age. It is now so long since the country has known a real Tory party or beheld high principles in any party that it may well be excused for agnosticism about all political virtue. After the betrayal of the country party by Peel in 1856 and their yet more shameful betrayal by their own leader in 1868, how could any sane man ever repose confidence in a party leader again?

This at least was what the Tory Cave of Adullam was now muttering in the lobbies and the clubs. Their strength and their determination no man knew, not even the omniscient Whips with their hundred eyes. But the fact of their discontent was no longer a secret. The Whips were beginning to get frightened. And, when the Whips get frightened, the Ministry has to cast about for concessions. The difficulty about concessions just now was that two groups wanted them in conflicting directions and that, unless both were satisfied, the bill could not pass.

The Cave's view of Toryism was what Harold Gaverigan, now a high-and-dry Tory candidate for a north-country constituency, was urging upon Coryton, from his privileged seat under the gallery. Coryton was shrugging his shoulders in his inimitable way and had begun his stock formula of inquiry, "Principles! What are they?" preliminarily to answering himself with a choice epigram, when the door-keeper crept up along the narrow gangway below the bar of the House and handed him a card bearing the name of Mr. Artful Cadger.

"Principles," said Coryton, rising to depart, "are the bastards of Conscience and derive their complexion from the keeper—for the time being—of that lady of catholic tastes. Here is the card of the keeper of my conscience, so I must be off. See you again. Ta-ta!"

"A conscience is a very useful servant but a hard mistress," said Gaverigan with a smile which remained on his lips as he watched the other start off down the gangway, bow to the Speaker with more than the carelessness of an old member and disappear

among the little knot of persons standing just inside the door of the chamber.

It was question time, and the House had not filled yet, but the lobbies were full and animated, with the sort of buzz of expectation and speculation, which hovers about a racecourse before a big event.

"I've seen two or three members of the Cave," Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle was saying oracularly to an admiring audience, consisting of the staunch Blunder Cable and the faithful Plantagenet-Unkels, who had come up all the way from Balham to hear the debate. "I've seen two or three members of the Cave just now in the lavatory and I am convinced they mean mischief."

"Pish!" said Toadey-Snaile, whose business it was always to overhear everything. "They've swallowed the free breakfasts. It's all rot to say they'll strain at the Beer and Buns clause."

"You don't mean to say the Government's going to accept that clause?" gasped Blunder Cable, feeling uncomfortable about angry meetings of ratepayers among the free and independent of Hounslow and half wishing he had not pledged himself so uncompromisingly against the principle of free food.

"Not a doubt of it," returned Toadey-Snaile, who had reasons of his own for wishing to know how the other would take such a determination on the part of the Government.

"Well, they mean mischief," Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle interrupted him with tiresome iteration, "they vow they have principles, protest that there are other considerations beside party, are not prepared to swallow anything—"

"In the same generous way that Sir Cincinnatus is," said Toadey-Snaile with a mock bow, completing the sentence for him and passing on into the House.

Coryton stopped for a few moments to talk to Mr. Holloway Pother, who was on his way to talk to Gaverigan under the gallery. "Well, Mr. Pother," said Coryton in the hearty manner he always adopted towards people reputed to be genial, "what do you think of the Stale Buns clause?"

"Eh! dearie me!" said the venerable Free Trader, stroking one of his chins and screwing up his eyes merrily, "is that what you call it? Well, to tell you the truth, I am in rather a fix about it. I've spent two hours in the library over Cobden's works trying to make out what would have been his view on the subject. But such a thing was never contemplated in his day and I can't find anything to guide me. If it weren't for the Temperance people, I should be inclined to support it. But good beer's so hard to get nowadays. One doesn't know what to say."

Coryton passed on to the outer lobby, where a policeman called out his name in stentorian tones for the edification of a line of strangers, who looked very weary with the long waiting that is always exacted of those who come to visit their legislators in the chamber, probably to impress them with the busy and important character of the place. Among the strangers Coryton recognized Mr. Rupert Clifford, who had come to ask an Irish member to present a petition against the Act of Settlement. He had only time to nod to the modern Jacobite before Mr. Cadger advanced to claim his attention.

That gentleman seemed somewhat awed by his surroundings, in spite of the assurance conveyed by a tight-fitting frock-coat and a brown bowler hat, not to mention a selection of paste-diamond rings which he wore outside his bright yellow gloves. The process of waiting and the insolence of the police, which would have irritated Mr. Cadger anywhere else, served to impress and subdue him in these lofty halls, whose atmosphere of sham antiquity has often served to overawe many a more hardened patriot than even Mr. Cadger. Coryton took him aside into the lobby which leads to the strangers' refreshment bar, and they sat down together on a leather seat facing a picture of Monk declaring for a free parliament.

Mr. Cadger wanted a great many things.

In the first place he wanted a pledge that Coryton would vote for the Beer and Buns clause, and he began to bluster a good deal when his representative coolly informed him that he should be guided by events. Mr.

Cadger talked of pledges; Mr. Coryton replied that courtship was a period of greater freedom and less responsibility than matrimony. Mr. Cadger hinted at a vote of censure in the Wat Tyler Club; Mr. Coryton indulged in generalities on a member's duty to his constituents as a whole. Mr. Cadger swore that the President of the Wat Tyler Club was not to be trifled with; Mr. Coryton threw out mysterious hints at other means of meeting his constituent's desires.

In the second place Mr. Cadger wanted money. He was Treasurer as well as President of the Wat Tyler Club, and the club's finances were now at low-water mark. The club wanted a billiard-table and some additions to its cellars. Would Mr. Coryton contribute fifty pounds towards them? Well then, five-and-twenty? Surely that was not too much to ask after all the club had done to secure his election! Coryton flung the man the stock phrase about the stringency of the Corrupt Practices Act, as one might fling a bone to a dog, but Mr. Cadger's sense of justice was outraged.

"You ain't spoke to me like that," he protested, "when you druv me from the Markiss o' Granby to the Blue Badger on the day of the 'lection. I said that letter you showed me were all werry foine an' that in course we was patriots an' all that koind o' thing, but that we was pore men an' 'ad ter think on ourselves fust. An' you sez, sez you, that were quite roight. An' I sez, 'Now come, deal fair with me and oi'll deal fair with you; wot'll yer stand us if we gits yer in?' An' you sez, 'B'leev' me, Mr. Cadger, yer'll not foind me backurd in doin' the 'andsome thing, if yer gits me in.' Well now, we 'ev got yer in, an' if yer calls yerself a gentleman yer won't go back on yer word now. Wot me an' moy mates wants ter know is, *are* yer or are yer not goin' to do the 'andsome boy us naow? Yes or no?"

Mr. Cadger was raising his voice unpleasantly loud and Coryton could see the ill-favored eyes of Mr. Beer Hardup watching him curiously from the lobby. So he smiled his most bewitching smile and said in his most dulcet tones :

"My dear Mr. Cadger, you must not let your imagination run away with you like that. Of course I mean to treat you handsomely. How could any one treat so fine a fellow otherwise? I have to be running off to the debate in a moment, but I cannot deny myself the pleasure of offering you some slight refreshment after your walk."

"Refreshment be d——d!" said Mr. Cadger curtly; "a foiver's the werry least as'll satisfy me. Come now" (whining), "yer won't be so 'ard on a pore man as to refuse 'im a foiver arter all 'e's done for yer."

"I am sorry you won't take any refreshment," replied Coryton, without turning a hair. "I must be leaving you now, as the debate has begun. Let me know if I can serve you at any time."

"Serve me! I'll serve yer in a way yer won't like," growled Mr. Cadger between his teeth.

But Coryton was already lounging back through the lobby, as unruffled as possible. He exchanged another word with Mr. Rupert Clifford, who was still waiting for his Irish member, and then made his way up to the ladies' gallery, where Violet, with Lady Elizabeth Gargoyne, Theodora and Lady Giddy, had secured the best seats in the front row by the cage. Questions were just over, and the Vice-President of the Committee of the Council had got through the opening sentences of his speech.

He was aware, he said, that great diversity of opinion existed as to the details of this Bill, not only among honorable gentlemen opposite, where diversity of opinion was chronic, but also among his honorable friends, where it was almost unknown. However, he hoped that by a little timely concession he would be able so to modify the Bill that it might commend itself to all sections of the House. This, it appeared, he proposed to do by a compromise, which, like most compromises, only served to alienate everybody.

The Tory Cave had consented, after much pressure from the Whips, to vote for a Bill embodying free breakfasts, but they had protested—and, what is more, meant it,—that nothing on earth should induce them

to concede another iota. The Independent Labor Party, on the other hand, had protested, with equal emphasis and in less measured language, that nothing less would satisfy them than free beer and buns at eleven also. They vowed they marvelled at their own moderation in not demanding more.

When therefore the Minister coolly proposed a compromise which would increase the breakfasts but not provide a second meal, he only succeeded in exasperating the Tory Cave, which had already gone beyond the limits laid down by their conscience, while he provided the Labor Party with the excuse they desired for refusing the gifts that came from the Greeks. There were murmurs from below the Ministerial gangway, which kept increasing in intensity and volume as the Minister developed his proposals; the murmurs found echo among the Labor Party opposite, where peal followed peal of derisive laughter, until the Minister could scarcely make his voice heard above the hubbub.

It was not a defeat, it was a rout, and the word went round the House that the doom of the Government was sealed. The Irish members raised a pæan of exultation and, as the Minister's speech came to an abrupt termination, they leaped upon the seats and waved their handkerchiefs and were only sorry that they had not shillelaghs with them in order to mark their joy by cracking a few crowns.

Coryton surveyed the scene with a vain attempt at calmness. His face lighted up with an intuition of coming triumph. He caught his wife's eye and smiled. Both felt that his hour had come.

"Shall you speak to-night, Mr. Coryton?" asked Lady Elizabeth Gargoyle carelessly, as he prepared to leave them.

"He is going down to save the Government," said Violet with a seriousness that made the others smile.

"You don't say so! Quite heroic," sneered Lady Giddy, who had never quite forgiven Coryton for getting married. "Almost another Quintus Curtius isn't he?"

Meanwhile it seemed as if the Independent Labor

Party had only to advance and occupy the enemy's positions. Beer Hardup moved his instruction to the Committee in a short and vigorous speech and, with an ambitious attempt at pathos, dwelt upon the hardship of compelling children to attend school all day and denying them beer and buns at eleven. He concluded by saying, amid ringing cheers from his colleagues, that their watchword was No surrender! and their duty to make no compromise. The motion was conded by Mr. Grit in the briefest possible terms, which, as Colonel Ballywalter whispered to Mr. Toadey-Snaile, was just as well, for the man spoke no intelligible language, not even his own.

By this time the rout seemed to have become general. The Ministerialists, sullen and dismayed, looked as if they would have liked to fling away their Orders of the Day, or whatever does duty, in a parliamentary battle, for chassepots, and take to flight at once. Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle stepped into the breach and was received with tumultuous cries of "Divide!" not only from the Opposition but, with even greater violence, from the Tory Cave. His speech (already type-written and liberally distributed in the reporters' gallery, punctuated with "Cheers") only served to make matters worse. He rallied the Tory Cave on their lack of patriotism in a blundering sledge-hammer sort of way, which made them all the more restive and provoked several stage-whispers about the patriotism of alien adventurers. He attackep the Labor Party for the ill-turn they were doing to labor in depriving the children of the poor of their only chance of obtaining free breakfasts; and the Labor Party were only the more confirmed in their impatience with the Government.

He sat down amid derision, which was followed by a painful silence—a silence of indecision and a silence of triumphant expectation. Some one called out "Cameron," as a drowning man might call for a straw, but Lord Rupert only gnawed his moustache as if to say, "You must stew in your own juice. This pie is none of my making." A rumble of "Divide! Divide!" swept along the Opposition benches,

gathering volume as it went. Dr. Bob Quid made a diversion by calling out "Order there among the rats!" because a Liberal Unionist member had sneezed. It was as complete a collapse as ever a government had known.

The Speaker had half risen to put the question, after a last lingering look around the crowded House, to see if any other honorable member wished to catch his eye; the attendant inside the House, with a brass chain round his neck, like that of the wine-waiter at a restaurant, had already poised himself to start and bustle the strangers out of their seats under the gallery; and the attendant outside, with a brass chain round his neck, like that of a city alderman, had already shaped his throat for the chaunt of "Clear the lobby!"

Suddenly the spell was broken. A young man, whose features were not familiar to most of those present, had risen from the third bench below the Ministerial gangway and was beginning to speak, as if it were the most simple and natural thing in the world.

It was a difficult moment to choose, for the House was in an excited, electric state, tossed about between derision and despair. Coryton, however, made the utmost of his advantages. He had not spoken more than two or three times in the House since his sensational election, and those who had heard him had been favorably impressed by his telling way of saying things and the opportuneness of their delivery. Moreover, those who had not heard him cherished a certain curiosity about the personality of the young man, who had relegated Mr. Loose-Fyshe to obscurity, and they were disposed to accord him a favorable hearing. His heart was beating very loud on what he felt was the great chance of his life, which, taken at the flood, *must* lead on to fortune. But to all outward appearance he was as calm and self-possessed as the oldest of old parliamentary hands,—calm and self-possessed and yet sufficiently modest and respectful in demeanor not to hurt the susceptibilities of the most jealous. His connection with Lord Southwark also stood him in good stead, for Lord Southwark was considered a coming man and known to have dabbled in labor questions,

and a good deal of curiosity existed about that nobleman's view of the Government bill.

As Coryton proceeded, the good-natured interest, which had welcomed him, deepened into a breathless attention, such as is very rarely accorded by the House of Commons even to its most famous orators. Before he had finished, it seemed likely that the Government had been saved and it was certain that the young man's reputation had been called into being. He had begun by addressing himself to win over the Independent Labor Party. At the West-Southwark election, he informed them, this very question had been prominently raised, and he had been able to satisfy the desires of a body of men, who went even further in this question, than the honorable member for Houndsditch (Mr. Beer Hardup). He had promised them, on the authority of the Prime Minister, a bill this session, which would give children in Board Schools not only free education, not only free breakfasts, not only beer and buns at eleven o'clock (Cheers from the Independent Labor Party), but also free dinners in the middle of the day (Renewed cheering). He now felt it his duty, in view of his election pledges and in view of the mandate of his constituents, to call upon the Government to redeem the Prime Minister's written promise, made to him last June. Let the portion of this bill dealing with the food question be struck out (Cheers from the Tory Cave) and another bill be introduced later on to confer upon the poor man's children the free meals, which the Prime Minister had promised them. (Cheers from the Independent Labor Party). After a few pointed generalities upon both the food and the education questions, which he skilfully introduced in order to give the Tory Cave and the Labor Party time to take in the full force of his proposals, he wound up with a brilliant peroration and sat down amid a tempestuous ovation, such as the House of Commons rarely accords.

The more his proposals had been rubbed in, the more they were liked on all hands. The Independent Labor Party saw a great triumph for itself and much glorification before its constituents and pay-masters, in hav-

ing extorted from the Government concessions even greater than those they had demanded. The Prime Minister's pledge was in black and white. It was public, formal and, as far as they saw, could not now by any possible means be shirked. It was a triumph for their policy, and it had the advantage of keeping in office a government infinitely more squeezable than the Liberal party was ever likely to be. The Tory Cave welcomed the emasculation of the objectionable clauses from the bill and felt confident it could procure the rejection of such a bill as Coryton had foreshadowed. The official Opposition also believed in the certainty of its rejection and, jumping to the conclusion that the fate of the Government would be bound up in it, rejoiced also. The Government itself was at first bewildered, as this was the first it had heard of the Prime Minister's pledge. Then gradually the conviction presented itself that this was the critical moment in their career and that, if they could weather it, their future was probably assured, while, if the worst came to the worst, delay would leave them to enjoy the sweets of office a little longer. Coryton had cut the Gordian knot and the tangle was unloosed.

Lord Rupert Cameron was the first to rise after the cheers at the end of Coryton's speech had at length subsided. He was always the quickest to take in a situation and seize an advantage. He began by complimenting Coryton on "his brilliant diplomacy, worthy of a Metternich or a Beaconsfield," and still more on the masterly way in which he had expounded it. He dwelt upon the boldness of Coryton's action and hinted with much veiled sarcasm at the risks he had run of being disowned in case of failure. "But my honorable friend has not failed," he added amid universal applause, "and therefore he will not be disowned." He advised the Government, if for once they would take his advice, to adopt the course which his honorable friend had suggested. And he advised the leaders of the Independent Labor Party, who had always done justice to his (Lord Rupert's) sympathy with Labor Movement, to accept the Prime Minister's

pledge, while yet it was on offer, and, in view of the generous concessions that had been made, to set up no obstacle to the separation of the two bills in the method suggested.

Mr. Grit followed, saying that he had great pleasure in accepting, both for himself and his colleagues, the terms offered by the Prime Minister, provided they were confirmed by the Minister in charge of the bill. This the Minister, who had meanwhile communicated with his chief, had no difficulty in doing and—despite a protest from Mr. Timothy Mealy that there was no occasion for eliminating the food clauses from the bill because the Government proposed to extend them—the motion for adjournment was carried unanimously, and next week the Free Education bill, lightened of its perplexing food clauses, was sent up to the House of Lords.

The Government was saved, and from that day forward its stability kept on increasing. So much so that, when the promised Food bill saw the light and was defeated on second reading by the connivance of the Government whips, the acuteness of the questions had passed away and the House only smiled at the impotent fury with which the Independent Labor Party proclaimed itself to have been foiled.

The Government was saved and its saviour was the hero of the hour. The society papers were soon throwing out mysterious hints about the offer and rejection of an under-secretaryship and even about the prospects of Cabinet rank being immediately conferred. There was no truth in the rumors, of course, and they all might have been traced to one source, but they served their purpose none the less efficiently for that.

As good luck would have it, society was then on the look-out for a lion. There was no special African traveller in London with new yarns about "the Anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders;" there was no Yankee circus-man with a picturesque hat and a certain knack of shooting straight at glass balls, acquired by much practice at the heads of San Francisco bar-loafers; nor was there even an Oriental Monarch, a revolutionary General, or a slack-

baked poet, with whom long, curlless hair and unclean habits might pass for genius and plagiarized impertinences for natural wit.

So Walpole Coryton stepped by common consent into the vacant situation and seemed to bid fair, with his irresistible Vixie, to "live happily ever afterward." Everybody delighted to do them honor, from the Prime Minister, who had said, "He will make a useful under-secretary," down to Creeper-Crawley and Toadey-Snaile, who abased themselves before them. All the saloons of Society vied for the honor of entertaining them, and Majesty herself, deigning to share the public interest, sent a "command" to dine and sleep at Windsor Castle. Everything and everybody smiled upon the happy pair, and no one assuredly was better fitted than they to derive the fullest enjoyment out of all that fortune had to offer.

"What have we done," Violet was never tired of asking herself and her husband, as she rejoiced again and again over the exceeding joy of living, "what have we done to deserve all this happiness?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SORROWS OF SANCTITY.

The treasure that He lent us in life's garden
Falk, we shall find no answer then but this.
Lord, we have lost it on our road to death.

IBSEN.

WHAT was happening to Gwendolen all this time? Had she found the upward path too steep, the narrow way too rough for her bleeding feet? Had she, like so many others in the first flush of enthusiasm, essayed a task which was too hard for her? Had she fainted or turned aside by the way?

Not so. She was made of sterner stuff than that. If her creed, if her conception of duty, was a narrow

one, she had with it all the thoroughness born of that narrowness. She had mapped out for herself what she considered to be the right course and, having put her hand to the plough, she was not one likely to turn back. Her aunt's shrill protests, the world's wondering sneers, Lord Baltinglass's anger (for when he found that she refused the ægis of his protection and the solace of his cheque-book, his wrath knew no bounds)—Miss Tyrconnel's tearful prayers—all left her absolutely untouched, nor swerved her one hair's-breadth from her purpose.

The only thing that could have moved her—a renewed appeal from her husband—remained unuttered. If, when she left him, he had followed her, sought her out, pleaded again for her pardon and her love, she might have forgiven him, might have thrown herself upon his breast and sobbed out all her sorrow there. The aura of his presence, the glamour of his love, might have reasserted itself and conquered her. It might have done so—and it might not. Such possibilities must be banished to the limbo of "might-have-beens," for she was never tested. In the first shock of her flight, Tyrconnel's wounded pride battled with his wounded love and kept him silent until it was too late. He was ill at first, as we know; then, when he had rallied enough to collect his scattered thoughts, when he sat down and poured out all his soul to her in a rush of penitence and weakness, the letter never reached her—she had left Cambridge for good. Her husband did not write again. This chilling silence was a thousand times worse than the most passionate rebuff. It stung his pride to the quick and made him more determined than ever to show that he could live without her, without them all, and that he could make his way in the world alone. Had he succeeded he would have written to her again, but he failed. How could it be otherwise, when the ground around him was strewn with the bones of those who struggled before and had been vanquished in the unequal fight? His failure drove him back upon himself and made him think more hardly of his wife.

He knew nothing of her father's sudden death nor of his ruin. When he thought of her, it was to picture her at Cambridge, the centre of a happy home—or perhaps with his father at Blarney, petted, pitied, caressed, taking a side against him, while he was struggling outcast, alone. The thought made his heart hot with indignant pain.

In the mean time no one knew whither Gwendolen had gone, not Lord Baltinglass, nor Miss Tyrconnel, nor even Mrs. de Courcy Miles. When she quitted the home of her childhood one bleak February day, the home which was already under the auctioneer's hammer, Gwendolen resolutely turned her back on all the world. Henceforth she would be dead to them, those false friends, those evils counsellors, who were trying to turn her from the path of right! A great longing came over her to be away from them all. After this turmoil and strife she wished to go aside into the wilderness and rest awhile. She chose the greatest wilderness of all—the wilderness of London. Here she took some little rooms in a dingy back street somewhere in Westbourne Grove, a street which was a sort of bastard offshoot of that paradise of suburban shoppers, Westbourne Grove.

Gwendolen had been guided thither by the fact that an old servant of her mother's had married and settled years ago and let out "apartments." The woman was dead now, but her daughter carried on the anything but flourishing trade. So Gwendolen drifted there, but despite all her fortitude, all her stern sense of right, her heart sank within her as the cab rattled her up to the door of that dingy house in that dreary little street.

It was the first step on her pilgrimage of duty,—or rather her sacrifice to a mistaken sense of duty,—the first, but not the last for many a weary day.

In the long months which followed she suffered—ah! how she suffered!—as only these silent, still women can suffer and make no sign. The burden of the Great City loneliness was upon her, a sense of desolation too great for words weighed her down. She did not indeed undergo that torture of vain

questioning and doubt as to the right course, which a weaker nature—one less heavenly and more earthly—might have suffered, but ever and anon her heart would go out in spite of herself to her husband, and an aching yearning would come over her to see him again. But she stifled it down, this holy yearning—treated it as men and women of her type are wont to treat the promptings of nature—repressed it and thrust it aside as if the very thought were sin. But stifle it down as she would, struggle as she would, the still small voice within her *would* make itself heard, the deep whisper beating ever in her heart—“*My husband!—My husband!—Wilfrid!—Wilfrid!*”

She little knew that on the other side of this great Babylon, the one her soul yearned for was fighting against all the hard circumstances of his life, battling against an insidious disease, toiling, struggling, in the vain endeavor to do something which should win back her duty and her love, which should make him “more worthy” of her. She pictured her husband as still abroad, at Monte Carlo perhaps, or at Baden-Baden, Paris, Vienna or some other wicked city. He loved such places better—far better—she tried to think, than he had ever loved her.

So these two wrong-headed young people went on their way alone, each sacrificing the heaven of happiness which lay within their reach—she to her mistaken sense of duty—he to his wounded pride.

Meanwhile Gwendolen had to wonder how she was to live. Her father had died a ruined man. Everything he possessed had been seized upon by his creditors—and even those few things to which she might have laid a personal claim she did not demand. Her stern sense of conscientiousness made her yield up everything until the last debtor was satisfied. But she was not absolutely destitute. She had a little money in hand, very little—but then a woman is said to want so little—and a few trinkets, which could, if necessary, be converted into cash by a process of which she had hitherto been ignorant. Still the fund she had in hand, though it would last for a time—for her wants were few and she seemed to take a pleasure in denying

herself everything but the barest necessities,—would not last forever. To prevent its dwindling too rapidly, she must work. But how? She had thought it so easy at first. She knew nothing of the terrible industrial struggle which presses even more heavily on women-workers than on men, which indeed in the low-skilled industries thrives on the very weakness of women. She had not recognized the fact that for women there is practically only one profession, and that an overcrowded one—to wit, matrimony. She knew nothing of these things. So she put her modest little advertisement in the *Guardian* and some other papers, to say that a lady wished to give lessons in music and painting and other arts. And then she waited. She might have been left waiting, for no answer came. At length she gave up advertising; it did no good and it only spent her money. It was as Mrs. de Courcy Miles had said, people didn't want governesses, especially governesses they knew nothing about, and Gwendolen was determined of all things to keep her past life a secret.

So she essayed fresh fields and pastures new and fell back upon her needle. She was clever at fancy-work of all kinds, flower-painting on satin, crewels, church embroidery and so forth. All these things she had been accustomed to play at in the pretty-pretty way, which ladies call "work." She took some specimens of her needlework to the great Emporium hard by, and endeavored to find employment. The result was not encouraging. They had no work to give, but the Manager, a kind-hearted man, touched by the look of patient sorrow on the girl's sweet face, told her of a shop in Bond Street which dealt largely in lamp-shades—marvels of silk and lace—photograph-frames, hand-screens, and like trifles. Here Gwendolen was more successful. They could give her much work at an inverse ratio of pay. But it was work she could do at home, and, small though the price of her labor was, she was thankful to get it. It helped to eke out her scanty fund, and it gave her something to occupy her thoughts.

She needed it. She worked feverishly, incessantly, trying through prayer and much sewing to still that

deep whisper, ever beating in her heart, to blot out that image, which strive as she might would rise unbidden before her eyes. By day she was fairly successful, but by night—ah! who can keep guard over the truant visions of the night? Sometimes in her dreams her love would live once more—her husband would come to her again, his voice whisper in her ear, his warm kisses press themselves upon her lips, his curly head pillow itself upon her bosom—and then she would wake with a start to find it was but a dream. A device of the Evil One, she deemed it, instead of the voice of Nature struggling against the unnatural restraints she had imposed, and, true to her stern creed, she would arise and kneel down shivering in the cheerless room—praying that she might have grace to fight against temptation, trying to comfort herself with the promise which comforted of old the doubting Peter :

“Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for My name’s sake shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

But Gwendolen was not Peter, she was only a loving woman; and, though she murmured in the fervency of her prayer, “Thy strength shall be sufficient for me”—yet in her heart she knew that it was not sufficient. How could it be? She was but flesh and blood after all. She yearned after the visible not the invisible, the tangible not the intangible, the real not the unreal. Yet still she would kneel there fighting with herself, while the hours wore themselves on through the night, until the first gray gleam of dawn lit up the sordid room. There was something sublime in this abandonment of self. It was the same spirit which animated the Virgin Martyrs of the Early Church and made them yield their slender bodies to the rack and to the flames.

But the Virgin Martyrs probably found happiness—the happiness which the Moslem feels when he rushes to meet his death upon the bayonets of the infidel—and Gwendolen did not. It is all very well to say that to do right is the only happiness. Gwendolen was doing right, or what she firmly believed to be

right, which is the same thing, since right is a relative term all the world over. Yet she was not happy. The awful sense of loneliness entered like iron into her soul.

So dragged the months along. March passed by, April and Easter came. The trees in the parks put on their summer vesture of green and the butterflies of fashion came out with the sunshine. The Season waxed and waned. In July Gwendolen read by chance of Coryton's election in the papers. Do what she would, she could not altogether keep down the feeling of bitterness which rose in her breast when she read it. This man—her husband's false friend, as she now knew him to be, the man who had ruined her father and brought her to the verge of penury,—was flourishing like the Green Bay Tree. Like the Psalmist of old, she found this thing too hard for her until she went into the Sanctuary of her faith. That brought peace and refreshment into her soul for a time, but only for a time.

About this time Gwendolen became very ill. The mental worry, the inferior food, the close air, all told upon her health. For a time she gave way utterly, broken down both in body and mind. All through the days which followed, scorching August days when the Park was a desert and the streets dusty and glaring, she lay in her room listless, dispirited, drooping like a faded flower, praying for death. So she remained all through the autumn which followed, until the November fogs came and stern necessity made her arise from her couch and take up her work again. Poverty is a hard task-master, it takes no account of wrecked lives nor broken hearts; and so Gwendolen found it. Christmas passed, the New Year dawned, but it brought no promise of joy or hope to Gwendolen Tyrconnel. The anniversary of her wedding-day came and went. She spent it with prayer and bitter tears.

One evening in late February she started forth to take her work back to the shop from which she was employed. It was the very evening—so mysterious are the workings of destiny, or so odd are the

freaks of chance—the very evening that Coryton was making his brilliant hit in the House of Commons. Gwendolen had been working incessantly all day to get her task finished in time. Her limbs felt stiff and cramped, her head ached, her eyes were dizzy, she had not given herself time for food—but she had done her work, and now she must take it back. It was not often she went out after dusk, but she had no one to send, and the Bond Street establishment closed at seven o'clock. She must get it there before closing time at all hazards.

The darkness of the cold damp day had closed in. The lamps were looming large through the gloom as Gwendolen walked along the muddy pavements, drawing her waterproof more tightly around her as she went. She felt weak and tired; she had not gone far before she felt she could walk no longer, so in the Bayswater Road she hailed a passing 'bus. It was an extravagance (every penny spent was an extravagance to Gwendolen now), but it was one she could not help. At the top of Bond Street she alighted and the 'bus went on its way down Oxford Street and Holborn.

The shop for which she was bound was situated in Old Bond Street, hard by the Burlington Arcade. There is not in all London a prettier sight than Bond Street just the hour after dusk, when the shops are lighted before closing for the day. The Art Galleries, the jewellers, the modistes, the flower shops, all reveal their treasures in the glow of the lamp-light, and the narrow thoroughfare brings either side well within the range of vision. But Gwendolen hurried along, her thick veil down, her parcel under her arm, looking neither to the right nor to the left. She never came to this neighborhood without a sense of fear lest some chance meeting might reveal her to those whom she of all things wished to avoid, and when possible she sent a messenger. But to-night it had not been possible.

About half-way down the street a man lounged out of a cigar shop. A stout man with big fishy eyes and a Jewish cast of countenance, over-dressed

after the manner of his type, with a loud necktie, louder gloves, a blue overcoat, and a buttonhole of blue carnations—evidently one of those low brutes who prowl around, seeking whom they may devour. As Gwendolen passed he accosted her. A woman, alone, and unprotected, was fine game to him. A cold terror struck her heart. All the months she had been in London this was the first time that any one had dared to molest her thus; she gave him a withering glance and hurried on. Nothing daunted, he stalked after his prey, following her, quickening his pace to accord with hers, every now and then making some remark whose inanity scarcely veiled the covert insult. How dared he?—How dared he? The sense of her unprotected condition had never been brought home so vividly to Gwendolen before. Oh! if her husband were only here. She hailed the shop for which she was bound as a haven of refuge.

She was kept there waiting some time, for those who come to sell are treated very differently to those who come to buy,—but at last she disposed of her parcel and received the reward of her labor,—a few shillings.

When she came out, to her dismay she found her persecutor still waiting. In her anxiety to avoid him she turned into the Burlington Arcade. In her innocence she did not know—how was she to know?—the reputation this region has won for itself when the lamps are lit—or that the smartly-dressed fair who flaunt up and down beneath the covered dome can hardly be said, like Cæsar's wife, to be above suspicion. The man evidently took the bend her steps had turned as a tacit encouragement, for he followed her and accosted her again, this time in unmistakable terms. She gave him one look of horror and indignation, and then sped as fast as her feet would take her out of the Arcade. As she was rushing across Burlington Gardens (just where the road turns into Bond Street) a smart little brougham dashed along at full speed. In her blind terror Gwendolen ran right under the horse's nose. There was a warning shout from a policeman, and a scream from some woman standing by; the

coachman tried to pull up, but it was too late. Before he could do so or Gwendolen could swerve aside, the shaft had struck her on the shoulder and she fell senseless to the ground.

In a moment confusion reigned supreme, the crowd closed around and the carriage came to a standstill. The brougham window was let down with a rush, and a little figure with golden hair,—a vision of satin and sables,—sprang out and elbowed her way through the crowd to where the senseless woman lay. A policeman was before her and lifted the drooping head, waving back those who huddled around. The lady of the sables and the satin gave one glance towards the senseless form, the white beautiful face, the shabby black dress. Then she shrieked in shrill amazement,

“Goodness gracious! If it isn’t Mrs. Tyrconnel!”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE WOOD OF ST. JOHN.

Extremes in everything is a characteristic of woman.—DE GONCOURT.

WHEN Gwendolen recovered consciousness, it was to find herself lying on a downy bed, lapped in an all-pervading sense of warmth and drowsiness. She looked about her in a semi-bewildered way. It was a pretty room, prettily furnished. The bed hangings were of rose pink, edged with lace; the toilet-ware and window curtains were of the same delicate hue, which tinted also the woodwork of the furniture. A night-light was dimly burning, and a fire of red coals glowed in the grate. It was a picture of warmth and comfort. By the side of the fire was drawn up a large arm-chair and a table with a medicine bottle and glass upon it, also a servant’s cap. But whoever had occupied the chair, it was tenantless for the nonce, and Gwendolen was alone.

At first she thought she must be dreaming. How came she here in this luxurious nest, so different from her sordid little room in Bayswater? Where was she? What did it all mean? She raised herself on one elbow, and again her eyes wandered round the room, taking in each item in mute amaze. Suddenly they lighted on her mud-stained waterproof, which was thrown carelessly across a chair. Ah! she remembered that dreadful man the rush across the street the blow on her shoulder. It still ached with pain the fall.

But how came she here?

A sudden terror struck her, banishing all her drowsiness in an instant. She remembered the evil look in the man's eyes. Had she been seized, kidnapped, carried off, while still unconscious, to some den of vice. Innocent, guileless though she was, Gwendolen had vague ideas about vice,—indefinite notions gleaned from chance paragraphs in the newspapers—veiled hints of wickedness too great for words.

Fearfully she gazed around in the flickering light, her heart seemed almost to stop its beating. What she expected to see, she knew not, nor did she know that those who are most vicious make the least parade of their vice. Anyway, her scrutiny was reassuring to her; there was nothing to suggest evil here. A few chaste water-colors in Oxford frames adorned the walls, over the fireplace there was a picture of a distinctly religious type; the chintz-covered furniture looked innocent enough to have graced the "spare bedroom" of a respectable family.

Still the terror was upon her. She got up and began hurriedly to huddle on her dress. Her head was dizzy, her knees so weak that she could scarcely stand, the pain in her shoulder made her slow of movement. But she managed to dress somehow, fear lent her strength.

With uncertain, feeble steps, guiding herself by the furniture, as invalids are wont to do, she tottered to the door, and opening it noiselessly, peered out.

Gaslights were flaring on the stairs and in the narrow hall beneath. The clock on the landing pointed

to half-past one. Gwendolen gasped. She must have been here nearly seven hours. She crept cautiously down the stairs. As she did so, the sound of boisterous merriment burst upon her ears. It issued from the half-open door of a room on the ground floor. Gwendolen shuddered and drew back. To her distorted sense, it sounded like the unholy mirth of a Pandemonium. Oh! to what terrible place had she come? How should she escape from it? Beyond that room lay the hall-door, and the safety of the outer air. She must reach it at all hazards. She had gathered up her strength for a sudden rush, when upon her ears there fell the sound of her own name.

"I'd just been round to Schwabe's to try on a frock You might have knocked me down with a feather," cried a high-pitched, staccato voice, 'I never was so taken aback in all my life. When I caught sight of her face, I'm blessed if 't wasn't Mrs. Wilfrid Tyrconnel."

Gwendolen paused in amazement. Where had she heard that voice before?—Ah! she remembered, she was not likely to forget, for with it was associated the bitterest hour of her life. And yet—Could it be?

Urged by an irresistible impulse, she moved towards the half-opened door. At first, she could see nothing. It was a long double room, with heavy curtains of blue plush dividing it midway. These curtains were drawn now and the back part of the room, which Gwendolen entered with noiseless step, lay in darkness, save that a glimmer of light made its way through where the curtains met. It was the smallest opening, but through it Gwendolen was able to see without being seen.

A sight met her eyes which was new to her, but which crystallized at once all her vague notions of an evil life. And yet on the surface there was nothing so very evil about this particular gathering. It was only the burlesque actress, Miss de Vere, née Popkins, entertaining Miss Gussie Gutter of music-hall fame, Miss Pussie Prancewell, and a few friends of the other sex to supper after the play. True, the guests were expressing themselves in that free-and-

easy fashion current in Bohemia ; and, if noise were a criterion, they seemed to be enjoying themselves, though very likely they were not, for Bohemia is often at the bottom as dull and flat as average Exeter Hall respectability. But Gwendolen judged from appearances.

It was a little, gaudily-furnished room, crammed with furniture, *poufs*, cushions and photographs, a room full of discords of color and glare of gilding. The air was thick with tobacco smoke and heavy with scent. On a round table pushed away now against the wall, were the remains of a substantial supper—oysters and chablis, lobsters and champagne, devilled bones and brandies and sodas,—plenty of variety and plenty of everything. The light from the red lamp-shades threw a meretricious glow over the group gathered around the fire. Sally was there, the centre of the group, lying back in a low chair heaped around with downy cushions—but not Sally as Gwendolen had seen her last—as she had pictured her ever since, a poor little Marguerite in a shabby black frock,—but Sally radiant with rouge and pearl powder, with diamonds—real or sham—gleaming on her white bosom and in the golden mist of her fluffy hair,—Sally in shimmer of satin and lace—Sally a very Circe incarnate, with a cigarette stuck between her lips and a big tumbler of something by her side, her roguish little face lit up as she held forth for the benefit of the others around her. And those others ! Miss Gussie Gutter in a flaunting garb of red and yellow, with her hands clasped behind her head, sitting on the arm of a chair, and that hereditary legislator, Lord Welcher, reclining on the bearskin rug at her feet,—Miss Prancewell also *en grande tenue* on a sofa, and by her side—what did he here?—that eminent legislator and Exeter Hall luminary, Mr. Toadey-Snail, M.P. There was yet one more—his back was towards her, but Gwendolen had no difficulty in recognizing the thick-set bull neck and stubbly black hair of Lord Pimlico. With difficulty she suppressed a scream. To what terrible place had she been brought ? The trail of the serpent seemed over all ; yet she could not fly ; terror and amazement kept her

rooted to the spot. She put her hand to her heart, and gasped for breath. Meanwhile the high-pitched voice went on :

"So I told the bobby that she was a friend of mine. What are you grinning at Pim? What else could I say? And he lifted her into the brougham and off we were like a shot out of that horrid crowd which was enough to suffocate anybody. The doctor says the fall's nothing. She fainted more from fright than anything else, and when she showed signs of coming to and was light-headed, he gave her something to make her doze off again. She'll be as right as a trivet in the morning."

"You don't mean to say she's here now," cried Mr. Toadey-Snaile in astonishment and alarm.

"You don't think I should turn her out in the streets, do you?" retorted Sally indignantly. "I am not quite such a brute as that and she was good to me once on a time. . . . Yes, she's upstairs in bed,—at least I s'pose so; I haven't seen her since I came back, but Jane's looking after her—if the lazy hussy hasn't gone to sleep, that is."

"Miss de Vere turned good Samaritan!" sniggered Toadey-Snaile. "How touching!"

"Better than a Pharisee, any day," rejoined Sally tartly. Her sentiment evoked a sturdy "hear, hear!" from the fair Gussie.

Lord Welcher gave a tipsy snort. He had been half asleep during this colloquy.

"Don't you think we'd better be toddlin', Gussie?" he queried drowsily.

"Dry up," retorted that damsel, giving him a tap on the head with her satin slipper. "Go on, Sally, don't take any notice of him. What are you going to do with her, when she comes to?"

"I'm blessed if I know!" said Sally, with a puzzled air. "It's a rum go altogether. Whatever could make the likes of her be running about the Burlington at that time of night, and all alone, too? And the doctor says he doesn't think she has had half enough to eat—and she'd got a pair of boots on that I wouldn't touch with the tongs,—all down at heel, and an old

frock—well it's almost as bad as what I used to wear when I was in a garret, starving on a bloater and four and sixpence a week, before—”

“You knew me,” interrupted Pimlico. He was always inclined to be spiteful in his cups.

“Oh, long before that,” rejoined Miss Popkins coolly, “though you don't part with any more than you can help—I know that.”

Whereat there was a general laugh. Even Lord Welcher joined in under his bibulous breath.

“I'm sure I can't make it out,” resumed Sally reflectively—“pass the cigarettes will you, Toadey, if you don't mean to keep them all to yourself. What beats me is how she got like this—a real swell, too! What can her husband be thinking about? But there, I always said he wasn't fit to black her boots.”

“Her husband!” echoed Pimlico. “He's on his last legs too, I hear. Poor Pigeon! Don't you know they had an awful row at Cannes about something or other, and she went off and left him then and there. You ought to know all about it, Sally—”

Sally winced, and turned almost pale beneath her rouge.

“You don't mean to say,” she exclaimed in unfeigned astonishment, “that she ran away from him because of *that*!”

“I do mean to say it,” repeated Pimlico doggedly, “and what's more, when he got back to England, old Baltinglass turned him out of doors without a sou in his pocket. I believe he took to quill-drivin' or somethin', but somebody told me the other day he was dead.”

He took another swig at his whiskey and soda.

“No, he isn't,” chimed in Pussie Prancewell, speaking now for the first time, “but he's precious near it, I can tell you. You remember Olive Jennings of the Gaiety chorus, don't you, Sally? She has been terribly down on her luck lately. I went to see her the other day, in Duchess Street, Soho. That is where she is living now, and bless me, who should have a room of the top floor but Tyrconnel? I met him accidentally on the stairs, as I was going up one day. I should never

have known him, he looked out at elbows, half starved, and scarcely able to drag himself along, but something in his face struck me, and I asked Olive who it was. She said she believed his name was Tyrconnel, and he was dying of gallopin' consumption—Gracious Goodness!—What *ever's* that!!”

There was a low moan—a sudden cry—the next moment the blue velvet curtains were rent asunder, and a pale, agonized woman tottered forward, and almost fell at the speaker's feet.

“Dying—you say—dying? Wilfrid—my husband, dying,—and I never knew it. Oh! where is he?—where is he?—take me to him——”

Banquo's ghost at the banquet—the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast could not have brought greater confusion than this sudden apparition—sudden as it was unexpected—wrought on this select assembly. The men sprang to their feet—all except Lord Welcher, who still sat on the hearthrug blinking his little red eyes in tipsy wonder. Sally gave a screech, Gussie Gutter, as she afterwards phrased it, felt “all of the creeps”—Miss Prancewell, to whom this appeal was addressed, stared as though she were confronted with a spectre.

“Where is he? Oh, take me to him,” wailed Gwendolen again, wringing her hands—oblivious of everything save her husband's dire need. The wifely instinct was aroused in her at last. She pictured him starving, dying, helpless, deserted. A great rush of pity and love swept over her, breaking all barriers down.

“Sixty-four Duchess Street, Soho,” gasped out Miss Prancewell, too astonished to equivocate. “There, don't take on so—don't,” she added, touched in spite of herself at the look of unspeakable sorrow on the pale face.

But her words fell on deaf ears. Worn-out by conflicting emotions, weak from long fasting and overwork, exhausted by all she had gone through; even as she spoke Gwendolen reeled and fell. For the second time, she fainted. . . .

“I think we'd better be toddlin', Gussie,” the noble peer said again when the confusion had somewhat sub-

sided. He had remained in a semi-torpid condition throughout.

Miss Gutter promptly took the hint, and, tucking his arm through her own, marched his uncertain steps to the door. Pussie Prancewell followed suit. Toadey-Snaile had long since disappeared, skulking off at the first alarm. A wholesome dread of the wife of his bosom and a terror of being arraigned before his constituents by a reptile press, if this escapade should leak out, lent wings to his flight. Sally was kneeling by the side of the insensible girl, chafing the cold hands. Pimlico hovered around, uncertain whether to go or to stay.

"Here's a silly go," he exclaimed presently, addressing Sally's back. "What are you going to do with her, I should like to know?"

"You'd better let her people know," said Sally without looking up. "Lord Baltinglass ought to be told where she is—and then he can come and fetch her away."

"Oh, that be hanged," cried Pimlico. He was in a very bad temper at this premature breaking up of the party, just when he had settled down to make a night of it, too. "You don't catch me mixing myself up with it. Why, he or the Guv'nor 'd be wanting to know how I came here, and then what should I say?"

Sally shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

"Tell a lie," she said. "'T wouldn't be the first you have told by a good many."

Pimlico glowered, but did not venture the retort which rose to his lips. Sally in her "tantrums" was a difficult person to deal with.

"Better have her put to bed, and we'll talk it over," he hazarded presently.

"I am not going to leave her any more to-night," said Sally. And she meant it.

"Well, in that case," he said sulkily, "I'd better make tracks, I suppose."

To this Sally deigned no response. But when he had put on his hat and coat and came to claim a caress, she pushed him roughly from her with a sudden spasm of shame.

"Oh, go away, do," she cried. "Can't you see how I feel just now? I might have been almost a good woman, if it hadn't been for you."

Pimlico made no further remonstrance. He was too much astonished at this new phase of feeling. He banged out of the door in a huff, and, hailing a hansom—there were always hansom's hanging round Alpha Cottage in the small hours of the morning—jumped in, and drove off westward.

* * * * *

"God may forgive you, I never can."

The words sounded stern and hard, but they were not sterner nor harder than Gwendolen's heart. She stood there in the cold, gray light of the early morning, buttoning her cloak with trembling hands. Every nerve quivered with repulsion as she looked at the woman before her. For Sally, moved by a strange, unaccountable impulse peculiar to excitable souls, smitten by compunction at the sight of the anguish which she had wrought, maudlin too, perchance, from the frequent nips of Cognac which she had taken to sustain her through the trying night, had told her all. All the story of that plot at Cottenham, of the net spread before the bird, of the one fall and subsequent recoil, of Coryton's suggestions at Les Douleurs and Monte Carlo;—of everything in fact, exonerating Tyrconnel and shelving all the blame, or as much of it as she could, upon Coryton's shoulders. Still, palliate it as she would, she was a consenting party, privy to the plot, the willing tool whereby it was carried out. The damning fact remained.

"I'm sure I never thought you'd take it like you did," snivelled Sally, moved to tears at this stern rejection of her prayer for pardon, "I thought you'd give him a wigg'in' of course, and then kiss and make friends again,—like—like anybody else. Why even if all I had told you was true—and it wasn't—it was no more than plenty of other men have done—and are doing every day. Oh! I could tell you some pretty tales about people you little think it of—and of old men too.

Old men," she wound up viciously, "are the worst of the lot."

Gwendolen put up her hand with a stern gesture of silence. But the torrent of Sally's exculpatory drivel was not to be stemmed thus; it simply swerved in other directions.

"And I was hard up too," she continued,—“very hard up, I was. I didn't know where to turn for a penny or I never should have done it—never. I lost everything on the tables, and he only gave me a tenner—at least that was all that thief of a Coryton gave me from him, though I'm quite sure now that he bagged the rest himself. Oh, it's bad to be poor,—that it is.”

She began to whimper again like a beaten puppy.

Gwendolen's eyes travelled slowly round the room—the rose-hued hangings, the lace-fringed curtains, the pretty furniture—all seemed to her part of the price of sin. Lastly her eyes came back to Sally herself—a poor dishevelled Sally in this morning light. Her eyes were red as a ferret's,—tears had mingled with the rouge and powder on her face, producing an effect akin to that of a washed-out doll. Last evening's dissipation followed by a sleepless night had told on her. She looked the wreck of her painted beauty. And yet—Gwendolen felt no pity. She had been fooled, tricked, lied to, she had been betrayed, she had blighted two lives, by her incapacity to take a wide view of life. And this woman, who had lured her husband into sin and who had lied to her, was now suing her pardon. Faugh! It was only one more piece of dissimulation. Just now she was a poor bedraggled Magdalen, indeed. By and by she would be smiling again, in silks and velvets and diamonds. A wave of repulsion swept over her!

"This is not poverty," she said, sweeping her hand around. "Shame on you—shame!"

"No, it isn't," said Sally, becoming in a moment less lachrymose and more defiant. The utter scorn of Gwendolen's words penetrated even her thick skin. A worm will turn at last. "This is the gilding of the pill," she went on bitterly, "this is what makes 'sin,'

as you call it—so attractive. Four and sixpence a week, a garret and a herrin', working from dawn to night,—that was what virtue had to offer me, so I could stand it no longer: I chose vice. And,"—looking around,—“can you wonder?”

Gwendolen shuddered,—shuddered at the gulf of degradation which seemed to yawn at her very feet. Sally misinterpreted the gesture and applied it as personal to herself.

“Yes,” she cried with a bitter resentful laugh. “I’m what I am, and I am not ashamed to own it. But bad as I am, I don’t know that I’d change places with you. You seem precious sure of being in the right. Well, you may be. I only know this: If a man loved me—worse luck, no one ever has—or if I loved a man, husband or no husband, I’d stick to him through thick and thin, right or wrong, good or bad, rich or poor, it’d make no difference to me. If he was bad as the Devil, I’d stick to him just the same. But you, with your cantin’ and psalm-singin’, just because of one little slip, you go and chuck your husband over like an old shoe—and leave him to die or go to the Devil for all you care. If that’s being good, let me be bad, I say!”

“Oh, spare me, spare me,” pleaded Gwendolen piteously, looking around to seek some means of escape. Every one of these reproaches, coarsely put though they were, sped home. “I’m going to him—going at once—only spare me.”

The look of anger died out of Sally’s face in an instant. She felt herself in the presence of some great grief, some conflict of the soul she could not fathom.

“There, there,” she said soothingly, “don’t mind what I say. You shouldn’t have provoked me. I only want to make up for what I’ve done. No doubt you thought you were doing right—though how you could think so beats me into a cocked hat. But then I am not a religious woman,” she added without any conscious irony. . . . “What are you looking about for? You needn’t be in such a hurry to get away. I’m not plague-stricken.”

“I must go to him,” cried Gwendolen, hardly hearing what the other was saying. “Oh! God help me out

of this wicked house! I cannot breathe, cannot think here."

"But you can't go like this," remonstrated Sally—"here's your umbrella, if that's what you are looking for. It's not seven o'clock—the servants aren't up yet. If you'll wait a little time, and have some breakfast, I'll send you in my carriage. You'll never find your way there like that."

"I cannot wait, I cannot wait," reiterated Gwendolen, looking wildly around her. "Sixty-four, Duchess Street, Soho. Did you hear what that woman said? He may be dying now—even now—and no one beside him. Oh! Wilfrid, why have I kept away from you so long? Oh! God forgive me!"

"You won't forgive me," said Sally meaningly.

Gwendolen turned towards her, the light of a great renunciation dawning over her face.

"I do forgive you," she said solemnly, "I was wrong. What am I?—I, who never knew your hard life, nor your temptations, that I should judge you? I need forgiveness more than you. I see it all now—now—that it is too late."

She moved towards the door.

"Let me come with you if you must go," pleaded Sally brokenly, gulping down her tears. "Let me come with you—you aren't fit to go by yourself, really you aren't."

But Gwendolen moved her gently aside.

"I must go alone," she said—"alone."

Thus she left her.

And yet—let the cynic sneer as he will—a few minutes after she had gone out in the gray dulness of the cheerless dawn the front door opened again to let out a little figure cloaked and veiled, who followed her—followed her all the way—afar off.

CHAPTER XL.

THE LAST STAGE.

“Out—out, brief candle.”—MACBETH.

THE fog-demon brooded over everything and seemed to stifle the morning with its vampire wings. It penetrated everywhere, creeping with stealthy, resistless step alike into West End mansions and East End hovels. Among other places it crept up the evil-smelling stairs of Number Sixty-four, Duchess Street, Soho, and penetrated into a sordid attic on the topmost floor.

On a narrow bed in one corner of the room lay the wreck of what was once Wilfrid Tyrconnel, fighting his last fight with the fell disease which had long since marked him for its own. The gray mist, which straggled in through the dirty yellow blind, was too thick to admit of his face being clearly seen, but his labored breathing could be heard smiting the silence, broken at intervals by a terrible, racking cough. Every now and then he would turn in the bed and draw the scanty covering higher around him, not that he was cold—how could he be with that dry fever running hot in his veins?—but in very restlessness, the restlessness born of a sleepless night. By and by, his hand groped on the floor beside the bed for the cup of cold water which he hoped was there to slake his thirst. He lifted it,—it was empty! There was plenty more water in the chipped jug which stood on yonder box—an improvised washstand. But he had not the energy to get out of bed to go across to it. He gave a little weary sigh—even that effort brought on his cough. Would the morning never come? It had come already, but he knew it not, the dull grayness seemed as

night to him. He had no means of telling the time. His watch? That had gone long ago.

At last a heavy step was heard ascending the creaking stairs. The door opened in response to a shove from without and a stout, red-faced woman elbowed her way in, a woman in a greasy cotton frock and sleeves rolled up her chapped and brawny arms. She was another specimen of that horrible genus, the cheap lodging-house shark, a shade lower than Tyrconnel's hostess at Bloomsbury, because a shade less prosperous.

"'Ere's yer brekfus'," she panted, in a coarse, fat voice, somewhat wheezy from the long ascent; and she banged down upon the bed a battered tray on which reposed a metal teapot, a cup, and a hunch or two of thick bread and butter. "And 'ere," plunging her hand into a capacious pocket, "'ere's yer letters. P'r'aps I'd better light the candle, the fog's that thick ye can hardly see yer 'and afore yer face, and then ye can read wot's in 'em,—somethin' good, I 'opes this time."

She proceeded to light a tallow dip with a brimstone match. The match sent forth an evil smell; the candle spluttered and flared in the murky gloom, throwing weird, misshapen shadows upon the wall. It was like a glimpse of Tophet, or one of William Blake's studies of Hell.

Tyrconnel dragged himself up in the bed and, seizing the letters, eagerly began to break the seals. The woman crossed her brawny arms and leaned back against the wall, watching him the while with a sort of contemptuous pity in which a gleam of avarice was mingled.

He took the packets in his trembling hands. The first two he knew alas too well,—rejected MSS. They had been backwards and forwards many a weary time. They came back again to him now, one with a printed form of conventional regret, the other with contemptuous silence. The third was a bill marked "account rendered," with an intimation that legal proceedings would be taken. They must hurry, he thought grimly; he would be out of the

reach of legal proceedings before long. The last was from the editor of a leading monthly Review on whom he had staked all his hopes. His paper had been accepted, it would contain the cheque. Alas! no—"pressure upon our space compels us to hold the article over until our next issue." Oh! this was cruel! The letter fell from his nerveless hands, all the light died out of his face.

"Well?" said the woman interrogatively. Then seeing that no answer came, she went on in a shriller key—"Ev yer got anythink for me, or 'ev yer not? That's wot I want to know. Come—hout with it."

"I—I—" faltered Tyrconnel, then his eyes fell upon another letter lying on the blanket, one he had overlooked in his haste. He seized it as a starving dog seizes a bone. He knew the handwriting; it was that of a friend, a dear friend in the old days, to whom, knowing that his paper was accepted, he had written in his dire need, and after a fierce struggle with his pride, asking for a trifling loan of £10 until the editor should send him a cheque. It was such a small favor—and such a dear friend! Of course it was granted but what was this? A platitude as to "regret" a lie about "so many claims" a false hope that "things may soon be brighter" that was all. He fell back with a groan.

"Come, hout with it," repeated the woman again, more insolently this time, for she noted how the blank grayness had crept over his face.

"I—I—am very sorry," he faltered, "more sorry than I can say. They promised, you know, to put my article in, and I had hoped they would have sent me a cheque, but it has been held over until next month—and—"

"'Eld over till next month!" screeched the landlady in her coarse, strident voice—"and so I'm to be 'eld over till next month too, I s'pose? Not if I knows it. That's a tale I've 'eard once too often,—I can tell yer."

"But—but, you see what they say," gasped Tyrconnel, holding out the letter. "They will put it in next

month—really they will, and then I shall be able to pay you.”

“I don’t care when they put it in,” she said, flicking the letter contemptuously aside. “Wot I wants to know is when I’m goin’ to put some o’ your tin into my pocket. ’Ere’s three an’ a narf weeks owin’ for rent, let alone yer keep, an’ all sorts o’ hextras which I’ve got yer, too. I won’t go on no longer. If I don’t ’ave somethink on account by to-night—out yer goes, so there!”

She stuck her arms akimbo and faced him with angry eyes.

She was not a bad-hearted woman—at least not worse than her kind, only the struggle for existence was pretty hard on her too. Years of keeping a cheap lodging-house and of haggling with prostitutes and penniless clerks had blunted her finer feelings—such as they had been.

“I—I—” panted Tyrconnel, looking round like a rat caught in a trap—“I will go out and see what I can” Here the cough came and choked his utterance. He lay gasping, panting for breath, clutching the air with his wasted hands.

The woman eyed him with stony indifference; his sufferings only seemed to add to her exasperation.

“Go hout!” she echoed, with a brutal laugh. “Yes, yer’ll go hout sure enough, I’ll see to that—go to the ’orsepital if they’ll ’ave yer, or into the work’us, where yer ought to ’ave gone long afore. You ain’t fit for nothin’ else. I ain’t agoin’ to ’ave no corpses knockin’ about ’ere and so I tells yer. I’ve ’ad enough trouble with yer already. . . . Well, I’ll leave yer to think it over. I can’t waste the morning talkin’ to the likes o’ you. When I comes back, hout yer go.”

So saying, she snatched up the untasted breakfast and bounced out of the room.

Left to himself, Tyrconnel buried his face in the dirty pillow, trying to shut out light, sound, everything. There comes a point past suffering, a dead apathy beyond the power of words to phrase. He had reached it now. All through the weary months

which had passed since we saw him last, he had been fighting his hand-to-hand fight with adversity and disease, but the struggle was too hard. He had been beaten at last, not in the spirit but in the body. It was this physical weakness which had dragged him down. In spirit, Tyrconnel would struggle on to the last, but the body had refused to do its bidding.

With that obstinacy, which—paradoxical though it may seem—one finds sometimes in the most emotional natures, he resisted still. Perhaps his pride helped him too, a pride inherited from his mother. And yet,—the thought struck him once more,—he had only to make a sign, to own his failure, to make known his need to Lord Baltinglass, and this sordid garret, this brutal landlady, these hideous surroundings, would vanish like magic, and he would find himself surrounded by everything that wealth, and luxury, and medical skill could give. But he thrust the thought from him with passionate scorn. He had suffered so much,—could he not suffer a little more? A few days, maybe a few hours—and then nothing this earth could give, nothing this cruel world could do, would matter to him any more. Earthly prosperity seems so small a thing in the presence of the King of Terrors. No, all things might fail him, but he would at least keep his self-respect. He would die without making one sign more to the relatives who had spurned him, the wife who had abandoned him. Better torture, better hunger, better death—better anything than that, to crawl back as a suppliant with that most pitiful word “failure” branded on his brow.

Brave thoughts indeed! Then there rose up to mock them the vision of that coarse-voiced woman worrying for her rent, clamoring like Shylock for her pound of flesh. Unless he could find something to stop her voracious maw, the vulture would not even let him die in peace. But how? The thought struck him like an inspiration. If he went to the editor of the Review which had accepted his paper and told him his need, surely he would give him a cheque. Editors were but human after all, and then—it would not be begging, the work was done and approved, the

payment was due. Full of this new idea he threw off the blanket, and got out of bed. Alas! he had reckoned without that laggard body. A few steps convinced him of the futility, the impossibility of the task. His feet tottered, his knees gave way that awful cough seized him again, shaking his very frame. He tried to stand up against it; he fell back exhausted on the bed.

It was true then—what this woman had said—he must die, die in a hospital or a workhouse—die with the task he had set himself to do unfinished, with his life-work just begun. Sheridan had died thus in poverty, with the bailiffs tugging at his sheets, but then Sheridan had done his work, had accomplished something, which would last through all time, handing his name down to posterity an imperishable monument among men. But he, he had done nothing—his name, as poor Keats had said in his unprophetic soul—his name was “writ in water.” If the remnant of life were so hard, wherefore should he live it? His eyes travelled around the room, but there was nothing—nothing whereby he might end his misery unless it were that blunt razor lying on yonder box There was a struggle then he thrust the thought from him in very weariness of soul. Why take the trouble to ante-date a process, which Nature would herself perform so soon?

With a groan he turned his face to the wall. The room grew darker and darker the fog crept closer and closer. . . . Exhausted by this conflict of emotion, he sank into a semi-stupor.

There was a sound of hurried feet upon the stairs. Not the landlady—he knew her heavy, deliberate step, the resounding smack with which her feet hailed each successive landing but too well. Some one opened the door. . . .

Who was this? The sordid garret seemed suddenly flooded with light. . . . Who was this on her knees beside his bed, raining kisses on his wasted hand, murmuring broken words of contrition and pity and love.

"Wilfrid—my husband—forgive me—speak to me. It is I, Gwendolen, who loves you so. Oh! forgive me—forgive me."

"Gwendolen! . . . Thank God!" he whispered. A great light broke over all his face. He held open his arms. With a low cry of happiness she fell upon his breast.

That was all. There were no reproaches, no explanations, no theological disquisitions any more. In that mute embrace all was forgotten and forgiven. After long grief and pain it seemed so sweet to lie here, lip to lip, heart to heart, oblivious of everything except their mutual love. The hours wore on, the fog crept closer and closer—it had no terrors now—yet still they rested here, babbling their passion with broken words—words too sacred to phrase—coherent only to themselves. Life had something left for them after all!

"And you have come back, really and truly—never to leave me more?" he said at last.

"Never—never," she whispered through her raining tears. "Oh! Wilfrid, the scales have fallen from my eyes at last. I know all. *I know myself*. What was I, that I should abandon you? Who was I, that I should judge you? I, who thought myself the follower of One, who said, '*Judge not!*' I, who, when I deemed myself nearest, was farthest from Him—cold, hard, unforgiving, wrapped in my armor of spiritual pride, false to His teaching, false to you . . . pity me, and forgive me. I cannot forgive myself."

For all answer he stroked her bowed head, not trusting himself to speak. The gesture in itself was full and perfect absolution.

"You will not leave me, dear one, never again," he repeated with strained insistence, "never again while life lasts. . . . It will not be long."

His words struck a chill to her heart. She drew him nearer to her, nearer.

All through the next two days she never left his side, ministering to his needs, anticipating his

every wish, bartering even her wedding ring to get him food, fighting hand to hand against the fell disease which was stalking him down, sending up ever from her heart voiceless prayers to the Great White Throne that this cup might pass away. With his consent she wrote to Lord Baltinglass, bidding him come quickly—in the dread presence of the King of Terrors all lesser evils seemed to vanish, all past bitterness to melt away.

But alas! Lord Baltinglass was in Algiers with Miss Tyrconnel, still hugging his wounded self-love and his resentment against his son. When the letter reached him it was too late

It was towards the evening of the third day. They had been talking of the old happy time at Cambridge and their brief love-dream until Wilfrid's cough came on again and she would let him talk no more. He was resting now, the cold gray day was slowly dying. Gwendolen had drawn a chair near the window, the better to see in the fading light. She was reading aloud in that soft, low voice of hers, the wondrous twenty-sixth chapter of Isaiah:—

"I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest."

There was a movement from the still figure on the bed. Suddenly he sprang up with a loud cry:

"Gwendolen—Gwendolen—!"

She ran to him and threw her arms around him, as though she fain would keep him with her through the very strength of her love.

"Wilfrid,—dear one," she wailed. "What is it? speak to me. Look at me,—only one word. Oh! Wilfrid—Wilfrid."

But no answer came. The lips quivered mutely but could not speak; a wan smile of peaceful trusting broke over the poor thin face; with a tired sigh his head fell upon her breast.

The troubled soul of Wilfrid Tyrconnel had passed through the dark waters—and had at last found peace.

L'ENVOI.

A CHEERLESS day followed a gusty night. There had been a downpour all the morning of driving rain and sleet, but in the afternoon the clouds lifted somewhat and the rain ceased, though no gleam of sunshine pierced the all-pervading grayness. A cutting east wind swept down the Bayswater Road, driving Gwendolen before it, making her draw her shabby cloak more closely around her as she went along. Her slight figure was bowed with grief, her face was white as the pale snowdrops she carried in her hand—a few she had purchased with her spare coppers at a dingy shop in the Westbourne Grove,—her votive offering to the dead.

What was she doing in the public streets, this widow of a day? Surely at such a time the mourner would tarry, sorrow-stricken in her chamber, striving to hide her grief from every eye. Alas! dire poverty does not give much time for the luxury of woe; it has scant ceremony for mourners' tears. The last sad offices had to be performed and, when one cannot pay other people to do them, one must needs see to them oneself. So Gwendolen had torn herself away from the death chamber, and trudged all the way from Soho to her Bayswater lodging. She had a few trinkets there,—all her most cherished possessions. She was going to pawn them now, so that she might satisfy the lodging-house woman's claims and give her loved one a decent burial. He should not rest in that dreary city of the dead, a London cemetery, surrounded by streets and squares and alleys of gravestones. No, she would take him down to Cambridge, to the little country churchyard of Grantchester, the church where they had been married,—the place where her dear father lay. There in some quiet corner she would

lay him to rest, to sleep until the Resurrection day. He would have wished it thus, rather than in the great, dreary vault at Blarney, with all the pomp of paid woe. And she would lay him to his rest alone. There should be no false friends,—friends who had shunned him in his misfortunes,—to come and shed their crocodile tears around his grave. They would come fast enough now, for they would know that he wanted nothing of them any more. The dead do not borrow, the dead do not need.

So thought Gwendolen as she hurried along, grudging every moment which kept her from the bedside of her dead. "God grant it may not be long before I rejoin him," she prayed. The blankness of desolation lay upon her.

She had reached Hyde Park Terrace, and was crossing the road just by the Marble Arch, when a warning shout from a policeman made her pause mid-way. A carriage dashed past, a neatly appointed Victoria with a smart coachman on the box. It came so near that it splashed her with mud almost from head to foot. Gwendolen looked up indignantly.

There were two people inside, clad in warm furs, wrapped round with a luxurious bear-skin rug. They were so engrossed with one another that they did not see her. The man was talking with animation, the woman was looking up into his face with a happy smile playing around her lips. They were Walpole Coryton and his wife.

It was only an instant, and then the carriage swept through the gates into the park, leaving Gwendolen standing there alone.

A great flood of bitterness poured over her soul. Some chord in her memory vibrated. Back on her ears there rang in mocking irony the words of the Psalmist:

"I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Then she wiped the mud from her face and went on again.

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